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# THE USES OF BIOGRAPHY.

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## CHAPTER I.

### THE MUSEUM OF BIOGRAPHY.

SOME few years since, in pulling down an old house in Gloucestershire, there was discovered between the walls a secret chamber. It was quite evident that several generations had passed away since any one had entered the room ; it was a rude, cheerless, comfortless apartment enough. There was a poor mattress, a stool, and a table ; on the table lay an open Bible, a lamp, and a pair of spectacles. No doubt was entertained that the room had been prepared for, and tenanted by, some one of the brave sufferers for the rights of conscience ; but who had last slept on that bed, sat on that stool before the table—for whom the little lamp had last been

trimmed, who had last opened that old Bible, no tradition or memory preserved the faintest record ; whether it were man or woman—whether spared by the soldiery, or saved to a life of peace and tranquillity, no one could know. It was just one of those cases of which one would wish to know a little more—to have taken a peep behind the deep black curtain—to have asked a few questions, as who? why? what? how? But there was no kind of life writing ; so all was a vague dream-land, and conjecture. “He died and made no sign”—so do most men.

The shadow of an unwritten life fell over that table, and across the room. The being, whoever he was, that had last read or slept there, left, in some sort, a vague trace behind, a trace difficult to decipher. Yet such as it was, in its vagueness, such also would be the state of our ignorance of each other—our ancestors—but for the pen of the biographer. We should everywhere be haunted or met by the traces of human footsteps. Nowhere should we be able to meet a record. Our whole world, without the information afforded by letters, is like a deserted room ; the ancient inhabitants have all departed—have left a lamp, a book, a glass—no more. If Cadmus had not given to us letters, cities, with all their inventions—ruins, palaces, and temples would be like hieroglyphic

characters without a key. Biography is the key to history. Yet every one, too, leaves a kind of written life behind him. What a man does is his life, and every thing one looks on is the writing down, in stone or iron, in the felled forest, or the drained meadow, or the grange, or the farm, or the mansion or palace, of some kind of life. Houses, cities, kingdoms, laws, literatures, and civilizations are biographies—life-long struggles, anxieties, groans, tears, and rejoicings; each man in the world writes his life, and leaves it behind him; few take the trouble to spell it out, but there is no life of any kind that has not a rich interest in it. Every life is historical, and all history is human; and to humanity all things human are profoundly touching and interesting. Man is compelled to have a regard for his brother man; sometimes he shows it by reading light and frivolous tales, and sometimes highly wrought fiction, and sometimes dramatic exhibition, and sometimes poetic narration, sometimes historic development, and sometimes philosophic speculation; but every where the subject of most intense interest to man, is man himself.

*Biography forms the Museum of Life.* Well written lives are as well-preserved mental fossils, and they subserve for us the purpose of a collection of interesting petrefactions; they illustrate the

science of life ; they are the inductions of moral anatomy. A biography presents to us, frequently, more than we could possibly gain if the hero of it were alive to converse with us. All that we see of the living man is animal ; the written life, the published letters, the journal, the conversation, frequently admit us to an acquaintance with his motives, his mind, the secret mainspring of his character, and exertions ; and unless it does this for us, it might as well be the life of a camel or a cow. But no life of any human being can be altogether sensual ; there must be in the very meanest life some gleamings of spirit, and we preserve these. The degree in which the really human, the mental life of a man, is preserved to us, is the gauge of its value as a biography. These are what give preciousness to the life, so long as breathing and moving is with us ; and the interest of the graphic sketch of personal history arises from the development on its pages of the life, in its principle and its method. If the hero of our biography does not live out before us on the page, if we cannot see a man, a reality,—if we have only a collection of sentences, and dates, the names of things, and persons,—if this is all, we may amuse ourselves as profitably with that interesting monthly—a Railway Time Table.

We have said that biography is the Museum of life ; but that it is so to us, depends altogether

upon the spirit in which we enter upon the study of it. By most persons, lives are read without motive, without discrimination; they lie within the library or the brain, like the bones in Kirkdale Cave, before Buckland; or those in the Paris Basin, before Cuvier. No study has been so entirely without classification and arrangement; innumerable narratives have perhaps been read,—and to any one, the reader has been, and is unable, to assign a character. Would the effort be wholly futile and vain to *attempt a comparative anatomy of biography*—to arrange the worthies of humanity in groups, not so much with reference to the mere pursuit in which they were engaged, or the region in which they moved; but illustrated rather by the more subtle final distinctions, which gave a character and bias to their minds, and determined their influence on society? At present, the venerable and the vile, the worthy and the worthless, the mean and magnificent, lie heaped and huddled in promiscuous neighbourhood; the mention of biography only suggests to the mind the idea of a vast pyramid of conglomerate marble. In the cementing cells may be seen preserved the pens of poets, the swords of statesmen, the garters and coronets of kings; yet all confused and indistinct, like fossils, but partially developed in the polished stone. And the probability is, that as we have seen

in museums, and collections of Natural History, the most common—not to say the most worthless—attracts the most attention. What numbers gather round the glass cases where Monsieur Scarabeus is pinned, with his bright purple or green shield, so rich and gaudy; or that other still more attractive case where, all silent and waveless, but most glittering in vermilion and gold, are the plumes of Monsieur Papillon. Now, if you went to such a company, and lifting your hand, pointed to the bone of some huge ichthyosauri, entombed in limestone, or of some gigantic megatherium, they would excite less wonder, and be less the objects of observation. Those vast bones, indeed, illustrate the past condition of our planet; they are the representatives of ancient dynasties of creatures who walked the land, and swam the flood, in ancient times, of which only the wrecks have been preserved to us. But the sight of these wonders would only excite, as you narrated the story, some “Eh!” “Oh!” “Bless me!” “Ah!” “Yes!” “Indeed!” from our friends in the museum—while Scarabeus the beetle, and Papillon the butterfly, from their glittering colours and neat shapes, would receive unbounded attention. Thus is it with the lives of men,—we know least of the most unworthy,—the lives of the Titans of our race in a few pages—the lives of the dwarfs in innumerable volumes.

Nor is this strange. Dante, the wierd and fearful poet, who, in the Middle Ages, wrote with such terrible earnestness, that, in that superstitious day,—the dread imagination painting the terrible portraits of the Infernal World—mothers, when they met him, hushed their babies on their breast, and said, “There, there! that is the man who has seen Hell!”—Dante put the matter, of which we speak, in a tolerably clear light. When dining once with the Grand Duke Della Scala, the fool, the buffoon of the court, was making infinite amusement for the court, with merry antics and mimes; the duke was pleased, and turned to the great singer Dante, and expressed his surprise—

“Why, now, this is strange, that this poor fool should be thus entertaining—should have so many clever things to say to us, to make us all laugh; while you, Dante, have nothing to say: you do not make us laugh. This is strange!”

“Not at all strange, your highness,” said the poet, “not at all strange—‘*The like to the like.*’ ”

And here, then, is the reason *why* of some of the most noticeable of our race we know absolutely nothing; and of others, in whom we now feel no interest, we have the chronicle of almost every moment of their life. Certainly the greatest lives are the most retired from general sympathies. The life of the many is passed in action; and,

therefore, the intrigues of courts and diplomatists, the roar of a park of artillery, and the bustle of a siege,—these, and events like these, must be far more interesting than even a night at the Mermaid with Shakspear, Jonson, Beaumont and Fletcher, for guests ; or a day on Windermere with Wordsworth, Wilson, Coleridge, and De Quincy, for companions.

To many eyes, then, biography would appear the chronicle of ingratitude, the record of selfishness. Men often appear to combine in themselves two characters ; but this is the first glance,—for men are always consistent with their ruling passion, and especially those men who have dared to act upon a large stage, before the eyes of men, for the obvious aggrandisement of self : the apparent inconsistency results from not looking sufficiently beneath the surface of the character. Walpole, in the *Memoirs of the Court of George II.*, gives to us a curious account of the Cardinal Bernis ; he had been elevated to the Vatican, and to the French ministry, through the interest of Madame de Pompadour ; through her also he amassed benefices to the amount of £14,000 a year : yet he who had not scrupled to receive benefits from the mistress of the king, whose flatteries had obtained the greatest, and whose conscience had stooped to owe to her interest the first, dignities of the church, grew at

once to be conscientiously ungrateful, and absurdly arrogant, when he put on the hat of the cardinal. He refused to wait upon her in her apartment, and to communicate, in the dignity of the purple, with a woman of so unsanctimonious a character. The world," says Walpole, "laughed at his impudent pretences, and she punished them. He had not enjoyed his dignity long, before he was served with a *lettre-de-cachet*, and ordered to quit Paris for his bishopric, the following morning. This cardinal appears strangely to have strained at gnats, while swallowing camels. But we can easily conceive that there was no inconsistency with himself in this ; he was obviously a most selfish and unscrupulous man : to cast from beneath him the ladder by which he mounted, appeared to him, probably the most ready way to more ambitious schemes ; but he had not mounted a sufficient height, and in attempting to fling down the ladder, he fell himself. But the cardinal was only an illustrative instance of a large class of persons with whom it is a virtue to despise the pioneers ; they scorn those who have paved the way.

"Your highness," said Columbus, "may believe me, that the earth is far from being so large as the vulgar admit. I was seven years at your royal court, and during seven years was told that my enterprise was a folly. Now, that I have opened

the way, tailors and shoemakers ask the privilege of going to discover new lands." It is not a Bernis alone that is ungrateful and forgetful, the most valuable of the labourers for humanity have met with similar disregard ; men follow as rapidly as they can the bent of their own passion, mindless of the aiding hands by which they have been lifted to happiness or power. Yet, in the pages of the truly written life, it is not difficult to decipher the history of the worthy character ; it is not difficult to separate, in the promiscuous assemblage of names, those which have well and truly served the world ; and those who only officiate as priests at the altars of Vanity and Cupidity.

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## CHAPTER II.

CONTINGENCIES AND INDIVIDUALITIES OF  
BIOGRAPHY.

OUR readers would not thank us, perhaps, if we were to conduct them through many speculations, by far more curious than profitable; if we, for instance, inquired into the authenticity of that idea of Mr. Coleridge's, that "the history of a man for the nine months preceding his birth would, probably, be far more interesting, and contain events of greater moment, than all the threescore and ten years that follow it." However this may be, *the contingencies of Biography* are certainly worthy of a notice.

"It may not be devoid of amusement," says Samuel Bailey, the keen and reflective author of the *Essays on the Publication of Opinions*, "to trace the consequences which would have ensued

doctor would have been like the heroes who lived before Agamemnon, and his immortaliser would never have lived at all."

All this may be very frivolous ;—but, perhaps, the contingencies of Biography might form as profitable a study as its uses, nay, be a preliminary chapter to its uses.

Trifles appear to be the very pivots and axle-trees of even the greatest biographies. A trifle is sometimes the centre of a future history.—Innumerable trifles have preserved us all until this moment. On what a number of trivial brittle threads hung the "Pilgrim's Progress" of Bunyan ; for he had some providential escapes during his early life. Once he fell into a creek of the sea, once out of a boat into the river. Once, near Bedford, and each time narrowly escaped drowning. One day an adder crossed his path. He stunned it with a kick, then forced open its mouth with a stick, and plucked out the tongue, which he supposed to be the sting, with his fingers,—“by which act,” he says, “had not God been merciful unto me, I might, by my desperateness, have brought myself to an end.” If this, indeed, were an adder, and not a harmless snake, his escape from the fangs was more remarkable than he himself was aware of. A circumstance, which was likely to impress him more deeply, occurred in the

eighteenth year of his age, when, being a soldier in the Parliament's army, he was drawn out to go to the siege of Leicester, in 1645. One of the same company wished to go in his stead; Bunyan consented to exchange with him; and his volunteer substitute, standing sentinel one day at the siege, was shot through the head with a musket-ball. "This risk," Sir Walter Scott observes, but surely with less propriety than marks his usual observations, "was one somewhat resembling the escape of Sir Roger de Coverley in an action at Worcester, who was saved from the slaughter of the action by having been absent from the field."

It appears amazing to us that Milton should have been preserved to write the "Paradise Lost." His life was sought, and he was only saved by a mock funeral.

Somebody has said, there is no such thing in the world as a trifle; there is certainly no little event, but it is beneath the dominion of some sovereign law. A step to the right or the left preserves the soldier from the unseen bullet. A hasty word has sometimes cost a man his life, and an idle laugh or a careless jest has broken the ties of the strongest friendship. Comines, the historian, was once visiting the Duke of Burgundy, and returning, he sportively commanded the duke to pull off his boots. The duke performed the service for

him, but concluded by thrusting the boot into the historian's face. For this offence, Comines ever afterwards sought by his writings, to render the duke infamous; and, when many years had passed, his books were tingured with the venom of hatred. We do not yet understand, and very few persons believe, that by a law within itself, every thought propagates and grows down to the remotest ages of time, nay, we say, eternity; that actions however trifling, as surely perpetuate their kind, and like, as any other active living product whatever.

It is impossible for the full results of any action to be foreseen. The future cannot be reached from the highest pedestal of the present. Many deeds, at first, seem as insignificant as the little mountain stream, that sends out into the valley a slender tiny thread, but which goes on enlarging and expanding until it becomes a mighty river. "No man can at the same time fill his cup from the source and from the mouth of the Nile." The little waters that genius calls forth from the rock of truth in this day, are destined to become the salvation streams of future generations. Who of the living of our time will be denominated greatest in future ages, is all a mystery. Perhaps he is now bending over his flickering lamp, in some dim closet which the world's cold eye has

never penetrated, or perchance is in the furrow, toiling for his daily bread.

Tamerlane, afterwards the mighty conqueror of Asia, once, when a young man, rested from his labours, despondent. Musing upon the difficulties of life, his eye fell upon an ant climbing up a steep hill with a grain of corn. Repeatedly it fell back with its burden, and not until the seventieth trial were its efforts successful. The warrior in after life, crowned with the glories of conquest, declared, that in countless emergencies he had been preserved from despair, by the recollection of the perseverance of the ant. When that monarch swept through Asia at the head of his countless legions, like a destroying whirlwind, he rode on the back of that insignificant ant. And when he built his pyramid of seventy thousand human skulls, he might have appropriately crowned it with the ant and its burden.

Robert Bruce, once hopeless that he should liberate Scotland, retired to a hut, and threw himself on a heap of straw, almost overpowered with mental agony; and looking round, he saw a spider endeavouring to swing itself by a thread from one beam to another. Defeat seemed but to add vigour to its efforts; and at the eighth attempt it gained its end. Bruce remembered that he had been defeated just seven times. He considered

the occurrence a presage of his own future success. He called his followers around him, inspired them with fresh courage, and released his country from the grasp of the oppressor.

Helen, the most beautiful woman of her time, having been prevailed upon to abandon her husband, by Paris, the Trojan, and fly with him to Troy; the Trojan war, which lasted ten years, and resulted in the destruction of Troy, was the consequence. Greece sent one hundred ships, and one hundred thousand men to recover her; and some of the most renowned warriors of antiquity were engaged in the enterprise.

"This woman was enticed from her husband—in itself not a very uncommon event—three thousand years ago, and the world, since that time, has been repeating the story. It was upon this subject that the greatest Greek and Latin authors wrote inspiredly. Homer and Virgil found in it their theme. And thus this little occurrence, like the little breeze playing in the harp strings, awoke melody on those human lyres that charms the whole world of soul."

"‘Overlook nothing,’ was the motto of Talleyrand. The gnat may sting the lion to madness, and the smallest breath of air blown into a vein, will extinguish life’s ethereal lamp, as suddenly as a cannon-ball in the heart. An iron pike has

been driven into a soldier's eye and through his brain, and yet the wound has not proved mortal. But the great anatomist, Spigelius, gathering up the fragments of a broken glass, after his daughter's wedding, scratched his finger slightly, and death was the result. There is a subtle poison, so deadly, that if a single atom of it be placed in the system, it instantly contaminates every fibre of the frame, and palsies the heart. And thus it is with our interior life. It may be inoculated with a virus so minute as to escape our notice, wrapped perhaps in a single word, but which may empoison our days.

"Nothing, therefore, is so much a trifle that the greatest may not derive advantage from it. Nothing is so small as to be beneath our notice. We would not have men constantly occupying their minds with little objects, and drawing from them mighty inferences. It is the province of small minds to magnify small matters; but it is also the province of large minds to give small things their legitimate place, remembering that the richest gem is but little larger than a grain of sand, and that the whole globe is composed of atoms."

We have pursued this matter thus far, and now may say there is no vainer work than to linger over the "If's," Had's," and "But's," of biography.

If Harold had not come wearied to the Battle of Hastings from a well-fought field in the North of England—had Cromwell and Pym shipped to the colonies, taking refuge from the persecution of Charles.\* But if Charles and James had been shot at the Battle of Worcester—or Richard Cromwell had been equal to his father, these are great *ifs*; but the little ones are still more suggestive.

One inestimable value of all true and great biography is, that it possesses *the power of trans-fusing character into the reader*. Some lives are innoculative; rising from the perusal we feel the ardour of the hero of those pages firing *us*. This is the result of such strong enthusiasm, that it penetrates every bosom with which it comes in contact, and of the highest orders of mind, this must always be asserted; they had a character,—for how can any works of excellency be performed without a will? And as the German, Novalis, has said, “What is a character but a perfectly matured will?” This is the irresistible fascination which attracts us so wonderfully to some books; it is as if from every page the clear bright eye looked out upon us,—we are magnetised. Thus it is when admiration,

\* I am aware that considerable doubt rests on the legend that they attempted to do so, and were prevented by especial order.

wonder, emulation, are roused within us, another soul takes possession of our own ; this will be in proportion as the character delineated is clear, distinct, and commanding ; and the value of biography in this particular, can scarcely be overestimated. For the great cause of failures in life, of all weakness, of much sin and suffering, is the want of character ; few men are trained to a proper sense of their individual value, of their own proper power. Indeed, in civilized society we note two classes of men. One may be described as seals formed and made to stamp themselves upon men, institutions, and things. Another class, as wax, fitted only to receive impressions ; such men are ever telling us that the age of romance is gone ; great things might have been done in another age, but they cannot be done now.

Heroism, bravery, chivalry, like the mastodons and the dodo of old geologic periods, have left the earth ; they do not walk abroad, they are entombed. " Had I," such people are wont to say, " Had I but been born *then*, rather than now,"—and then follow a long train of *if's* and *but's*. These are characterless people ; to them it seems as if all the difficulties of life met precisely in their way ; they have no sense of self-reliance ; they are passive to every stream ; they bow to every opinion ; the last is still the best, the truest, the

wisest. Now, must it not be wonderfully healthy to such persons, if early in life they read the life of some being who made all obstacles bow before him—who would not waste his being on vain regrets, but sought out his present, to shape some future—some person who had tossed all indifference with indignation away from him—who had wrought up all the earnestness of his soul to prompt on a commanding passion, or a strong invoking duty—who could say, with Pompey on a memorable occasion, “It is necessary for me to go, it is not necessary for me to live.” Who would, with Cæsar, burn the ships that brought his soldiers to land, that there might be no return; or with Milton, would gladly endure the loss of sight, so that the duty was not left undone. Circumstances like these are electrifying to weak minds; and a succession of shocks, if they do not absolutely change a character, and make it heroic, yet exercise a wonderful and perceptible influence upon it.

Ah! this transfusion of character continues long after all that was mortal of the great man of the past is consigned to the tomb.

“There lived in our country (France) a man who believed in the real presence in the sacrifice of the mass, in the reign and worship of the Virgin, in works of supererogation, in treasures of indulgences, and in the power of absolution; he believed

in the infallibility of the Pope so thoroughly, that perhaps the only trace of affectation observable in his life, were the demonstrations of submission, publicly made, to a Papal decision. Assuredly, according to the Protestant faith, this man was a very imperfect Christian, as respects his faith. He gave, however, examples of all the Christian virtues; he lived an eminently Christian life, opened his palace to all the wounded, friends or enemies; condemned all violence or persecution on the pretext of religion; he lived like an admirable Christian, in one of those periods when it was most difficult so to do—his name was *Fenelon*. Does any one imagine that there are many Protestants at the present day who refuse to admit that Fenelon was eminently Christian in everything except his faith? In our own days there has lived a man in our country who believed the papacy to be a scandalous usurpation of human dominion over the kingdom of God; who believed that the bread and wine used in the Lord's Supper are merely the common product of corn and the vine; that the sacrifice of the mass is the most prodigious of errors; that every priest who absolves, usurps the prerogative of God; that the assumption of the Virgin is a fable, and her worship a superstition;—this man, by the uninterrupted devotedness of half a century, succeeded in rescuing from misery, igno-

rance, immorality, and irreligion, a whole *commune*, lost in a wild and pathless district of the Vosages. In order to succeed, he had recourse to the secret of St. Paul ; he became all things to all men ; he was at once pastor and schoolmaster, judge and arbitrator, farmer, mason, road-maker, and became even a printer, in order to diffuse the holy truths of Christianity : his name was *Oberlin*. According to the Catholic faith, it would not have been easy to have met with a Christian more imperfect in respect of faith. Does any one imagine that many Catholics could be found at the present day who would hesitate to proclaim, that in all other respects it would have been difficult to have found a better Christian than Oberlin ?” \*

These two men have not lived in vain ; they have transfused their lives into Christendom ; they yet electrify all who read their lives ; there is diffused over the spirit a desire to be thus spiritually strong. These lives transmit a posterity down to distant times. Does not the reader know something of this ? Has he not felt, whilst he has perused the lives of men long dead, that their spirit was present in the record. “He being dead yet speaketh.”

This is the everlasting eulogium upon departed piety and worth. Nor do the dead speak alone ;

\* See Coquerel's Adaptation of Christianity to the Nature of Man.

their influence is really more active, perhaps, than when they seemed more entirely to live with us. That influence has increased in its momentum—the authority of the dead over us. When that authority comes vested in the sacred robes of virtue and Christianity, it is very powerful—the shades of creed die out—the men who seemed so distant from one another while they lived. Why, look in our library, how we place them together—a type of the union of their spirits in a world far higher than the world of biographies and books. •

### CHAPTER III.

#### CLASSIFICATIONS OF BIOGRAPHY.—I. HISTORICAL.

**MANY** classifications of biography may be attempted with a view to the delineation of its uses and value. There is, first, that large domain of biography, which may be called **HISTORICAL BIOGRAPHY**, which, indeed, merges itself in history. There are names, to remove which from the historic chart, would be altogether to interfere with the course of the historic river. It is vain to speculate on what we might have been, or what history might have been, if this man and that had not lived. It is enough for us to know that they did break up the existing landmarks of nations and ages. They, in fact, whenever they appeared, were a new element in society.

To become this, it appears they were born—their arm was strong—their eye was bright and

clear. They could clearly see, and bravely do, in a human light. In private, social relations, the less we inquire touching these persons the better.

William the Norman was such a man: he courted his wife, Matilda of Flanders, by rolling her in the kennel, on the way from church—importunate lover!

Napoleon was a strong man. He would, when the King of Rome was born, gladly have sacrificed his wife, Maria of Austria, had it been necessary for one of the lives to have been sacrificed.

Few of the men, whose names are historical, bear a microscopic examination. Alfred stands almost alone in this respect. These men, these historical men, are the pillars of fire; rays dart out from them, illuminating a whole territory—nay a whole continent. The illumination is not confined to extensive tracts of country; it extends to remote time. This is history—a drama acted on the large stage of the world; and in this sense, many humbler lives than those of warriors and emperors are historic.

Did Charlemagne strike out a more extensive range of conquests than Watts? Did Rhodolph of Hapsburg found a mightier empire than John Faust? Did Napoleon effect social revolutions more complete than Arkwright? Great names do give their character to periods of time. It has

been said that every institution is the prolonged shadow of some great man.

There is nothing in the political state of Continental Europe that does not remind us of Charlemagne: there is nothing in the local government of England that does not remind us of Alfred.—Louis IX. was one of the great names of historic biography. “He reformed from the centre outward,” sitting upon the throne of Charlemagne, and resolutely defending that extended feudalism of which Charlemagne was the founder—yet he broke up and destroyed its power. There are few greater names in history than that of Louis.—What was the result of that protest against, and abolition of the law of diffidation? Louis was the peace-maker of all France in his day. To him, and to his influence, the serenity of advancing civilization over the whole land during the middle ages may be traced. He was, in the truest sense of the word, a great man—a man of ideas. He himself struck a blow at the spirit of the middle ages, and he prepared the way for the most daring attacks upon the reign of perpetual despotism.

Names of this order represent ideas—vast ideas. Yet the mind and the life of the father of the Revolution should be studied as far as possible by itself. The state of empires should not be con-

fused with the author of the great changes. Biography would lead us to an examination of the individual character of this or that man—would show us, in a measure, how it came to pass that he was thus forced out to action; how he, of all men living, or of all kings living, became the founder of influences so vast. If the mind of a *Zodiac* of kingdoms has been affected by the existence of that one mind, surely the study of that one must be a matter of no little importance.

Biography, we said a few pages back, was a museum. Yes, and there lie before us the memorials of every age, country, and race. The analytic process has not been very keenly applied to the papyri in the museum, or what a store of lessons might have been revealed! What lessons are constantly revealing, spite of the carelessness with which its pages are usually perused? The analytic process applied to historic biography—simple enough—difficult enough—it would lead to important conclusions, perhaps, in reference to the birth of nations; it would explain many incoherencies and difficulties in historic character. Mr. Sharon Turner has applied it thus, in his account of the Life of Alfred;\* and whatever may be the conclusion in our own minds, in reference to the “His-

\* In the Anglo-Saxons.

toric Doubts" of Horace Walpole, in his "Life of Richard III.," or Miss Halstead's life of the same personage, they both furnish us with hints which may be profitably applied to the explication of other mysteries of history. Analytic biography rescues from contempt and dishonour, many a name that popular prejudice may cast its revilements upon; and the same authority consigns many a boasted and heroic name to the pillory of everlasting shame and contempt. The illustrious and magnificent maiden, Joan of Arc, is proclaimed to all, the prophetess, and priestess, and real monarch of her country's liberties; while it dooms Catherine de Medicis to perpetual infamy. Our literature, at present, is eminently characterised by analytic acumen, in treating of historic character; and this not always from the discovery of new facts in the chronicle of a life, but from the application of the *experimentum crucis*, the test of character, to old records; the judging of characters, not in patches, but in their entireness; not in fragments, but as wholes. Thus we have been compelled to re-read many ancient histories, and to re-consider the preformed judgments of many ancient men.

We find by this verdict, that Mahomet, no more than Cromwell, was the impostor we deemed him to be; he was not an impostor, we fancy, to himself, and that is the test and the key to all impos-

ture. We find that we have walked through the galleries of history under an illusion, with reference to many of the master builders ; grateful for the hints of great critics, we have proceeded to apply this test of wholeness to monarchs and madmen, to pontiff and priest. There is, now-a-days, no character too dignified to be brought beneath the compasses of criticism.

It is to this province of analytic biography that we hand over these illustrations which meet us in reference to Race, and its distinctions. Who does not hail with emotions of joy every word tending to show how near all the varieties of the human family are to each other, although the sun has painted a different colour on the skin, and perhaps compelled also the pronunciation of a different language? Who does not hail those records of humanity, which proclaim that all these are brethren? Biography has thus an ethnographical character and importance. I know there are differences between the Grecian and the Iberian—between the Swiss mountaineer and the Hindoo—between the North American Indian and the Mexican—between the Egyptian and the Hindoo. Biography notes to me the difference. What then?—Let us still travel on to note these points of difference, or resemblance. If the men of these different races will tell us their story—if they will

show us how they lived,—and, better still, how they thought,—and, better still, how they loved, and hoped, and rejoiced, and feared,—perhaps the foundations upon which we may ascend to generalizations upon the whole conditions, character, and prospects of man, may then be laid. When the proud Celt or Saxon, or some upstart mongrel Yankee, talks of the inferiority of the African race, how well does the finger of analytic biography point to a score of illustrious names darting forth in the very teeth of the bloodhounds who would hunt down the whole of the human family whose skin differs from their own. Toussaint L'Ouverture, in whose veins not a drop of other than African blood flowed—the Washington of Hayti; it is to that baseness we mainly owe the ignorance of the life of this extraordinary man. The *results* of his powerful intellect, undoubted courage, and generous philanthropy, could not be hid; but the same tyranny which meanly murdered him in a European dungeon, blotted out all the best sources of information, as to the means by which he accomplished them. But the facts which are derived through this very enemy, unsmothered by avalanches of abuse, are quite sufficient for our purpose.

“Toussaint was born on the plantation Noe, managed by M. Bayou *de Libertas*. His early

years are said to be marked by an extraordinary evenness of temper, and an enthusiastic benevolence towards, and wonderful control over, the brute animals, which it was his business to tend. Though his master's name ought to have ensured him full opportunity to cultivate his mind, he seems to have been indebted to his own unaided and clandestine efforts for his education. A French writer reproaches M. Bayou de Libertas for his culpable negligence in not being aware that his slave had learned to read till he was familiar with the writings of the Abbe Raynal. His master, however, lived to see good reasons for not repenting of any kindness bestowed upon this slave. Toussaint did not join the Negroes when they rose, in 1791, till he had seen his master and family safely embarked for the United States, with liberal supplies. He then devoted himself to the cause of his brethren with such zeal, activity, and talents, that he ultimately secured from them the most cordial, and universal obedience, and a respect little short of adoration.

“Complete emancipation was offered by the French commissioners to all who would take up arms against the British invaders, in 1793. It was with their characteristic energy and perseverance, that the British attempted to wrest this opulent colony from their old rivals, and re-establish the peace of that despotism which they considered

essential to the safety of their own West Indian possessions. And it was to the energy and superior military skill of Toussaint that his countrymen owed the preservation of their newly-acquired liberty. The British were not compelled to retire, till he was made general-in-chief and governor of the colony.

“ After the expulsion of the foreign foe, Toussaint applied himself to the arts of peace not less successfully than he had done to those of war.— We are assured by the most respectable French authorities, who were themselves planters and eye-witnesses, that the colony, under his government, ‘marched, as if by enchantment, towards its ancient splendour.’ ‘The colony,’ says another writer, ‘flourished under Toussaint. The whites lived happily, and in peace, upon their estates, and the negroes continued to work for them.’ No one, who has not weighed the difficulties that lay before him, can duly appreciate the honours which these facts throw upon the character of Toussaint. The field of his operations was a country desolated by seven years of fierce and complicated civil war, in which all the bad passions of human nature had burst into the wildest madness that oppression could drive them to, and had been urged on in the work of destruction by the most powerful foreign influence. Worse materials for the estab-

lishment of peace, industry, and good government, could not well be imagined. Yet, Toussaint not only succeeded in governing the country, but he succeeded in attaching to himself all the parties and castes into which its distracted inhabitants were divided. It was this very success which, doubtless, stirred up against him the wrath of Napoleon, leading to the suspicion, which was contrary to fact, that it was the design to make the country independent of France.

“The disgraceful expedition under Le Clerc is said to have been urged upon Bonaparte by the whites, who were dissatisfied with the loss of their slaves; but these whites, it would seem, were chiefly those who had fled to France. Those who remained on the island till Toussaint rose to the government, were mostly satisfied with the system of free labour, which, under his administration, was more profitable than the old slavery. On this point we have the best testimony that could be wished. The historian who was employed to lull the French people, salve the wounded fame and pride of Bonaparte for the defeat of Le Clerc and Rochambeau, and drown the cries of the widows and orphans of sixty thousand Frenchmen, assigns the disaffections of the whites in the colony itself, as one great reason of the failure. He says—‘It would seem to be the natural course to organise

into a national guard the inhabitants who were found in the towns, on the arrival of the army; but there was not a man in whom any confidence could be placed. *The majority of the inhabitants of the towns loved the government of Toussaint, because he had gorged them with riches.* Again, in excusing Rochambeau for the same failure to avail himself of the aid of the colonial whites, he says, 'It may be said for him that he could not, any more than Captain-General Le Clerc, put confidence in the whites, the majority of the inhabitants of the towns mourning, I repeat it, for the regime of Toussaint, which had enriched them.'

"Toussaint is represented by those who knew him well, and had no reason to overrate his powers or his virtues, as a man of deep sagacity and untiring activity; veracious to a proverb; humane and affectionate; extremely temperate, and remarkably exalted above the vanity which prejudice affirms to be characteristic of his race. He slept little, ate sparingly, drank nothing but water, and habitually tired five secretaries in the transaction of his official business. In war, he conquered by the foresight of his combinations, and the celerity of his movements. In peace, he repressed opposition, by listening to complaints, and making it the interest of all parties to uphold the law. The same author, to whom we have already referred, in

describing the system of Toussaint in regard to the former slaves, who were required by law to work, says, 'They had a fourth of the produce, *which was too much*.' So it seems he not only enriched the citizens of the towns, but the labourers.

"Such was the man whom Bonaparte resolved to crush. But mark, how he trusted to lying and treachery rather than to the valour of his bravest veterans.

"Le Clerc invaded St. Domingo with double the number of men Toussaint had then at command.\* Yet he gained nothing in the field. At last, by deceitful proclamations, and French gold, he allayed apprehensions, and cut the nerves of resistance, till Toussaint, too honest to fathom the deceit of his foe, retired from public life to his plantation, upon the pledged faith of France that his peace should not be disturbed. His sword was no sooner sheathed, than he found himself a prisoner on the way to France. If the treatment of Napoleon at St. Helena showed how Europe feared his power, what are we to say of the confinement and starvation of Toussaint in the castle of Joux?"

The name of Juan Placido, the Cuba slave, is not so well known, but he appears to have been equal if not superior to Toussaint in the deve-

\* De Lattre himself confesses that Toussaint had never more than sixteen thousand men.

lopment of a calm and magnificent heroism. But very little has been said about him in this country ; and we may therefore quote, with the expectation that they will excite interest in the mind of our readers, the following particulars, from a work by the distinguished American poet Whittier, called, "The Stranger in Lowell." We believe the extracts are new to this country. This man, too, is worthy to be ranked with George Washington. He was the leader in the revolt of the Cuban slaves, in 1844,—a negro and a man.

"I have recently," says Whittier, "been deeply interested in the fate of Placido—the black revolutionist of Cuba—the acknowledged leader of the late wide-spread and well-planned revolt of the slaves in the city of Havana, and the neighbouring plantations and villages.

"Juan Placido was born a slave on the estate of Don Terribio de Castro. His father was an African, his mother a mulatto. His mistress treated him with great kindness, and taught him to read. When he was twelve years of age, she died, and he fell into other and less compassionate hands. At the age of eighteen, on seeing his mother struck with a heavy whip, he for the first time turned upon his tormentors. To use his own words, 'I felt the blow in my heart. To utter a loud cry, and from a downcast boy with the

timidity of one meek as a lamb, to become all at once like a raging lion, was a thing of a moment.' He was, however, subdued ; and the next morning, together with his mother, a tenderly-nurtured and delicate woman, severely scourged. On seeing his mother rudely stripped and thrown down upon the ground, he at first with tears implored the overseer to spare her ; but at the sound of the first blow, as it cut into her naked flesh, he sprang once more upon the ruffian, who, having superior strength, beat him until he was nearer dead than alive.

“ After suffering all the vicissitudes of slavery—hunger, nakedness, stripes ; after bravely and ably bearing up against that slow, dreadful process which reduces the man to a thing—the image of God to a piece of merchandise—until he had reached his thirty-eighth year, he was unexpectedly released from his bonds. Some literary gentlemen in Havana, into whose hands two or three pieces of his composition had fallen, struck with the vigour, spirit, and natural grace which they manifested, sought out the author, and raised a subscription to purchase his freedom. He came to Havana, and maintained himself by house-painting, and such other employments as his ingenuity and talents placed within his reach. He wrote several poems, which have been published in Spanish at Havana,

and translated by Dr. Madden, under the title of  
'Poems by a Slave.'

"It is not too much to say of these poems, that they will bear a comparison with most of the productions of modern Spanish literature. Certain it is, that their author is the only Cuban poet. His style is bold, free, energetic. Some of his pieces are sportive and graceful; such is his address to 'The Cucuya,' or Cuban fire-fly."

"Some of his devotional pieces evince the fervour and true feeling of the Christian poet. His 'Ode to Religion' contains many admirable lines. Speaking of the martyrs of the early days of Christianity, he says finely—

'Still in that cradle, purpled with their blood,  
The infant faith waxed stronger day by day.'

"I cannot forbear quoting the last stanzas of this poem.

'O God of mercy, throned in glory high,  
On earth and all its misery look down;  
Behold the wretched, hear the captive's cry,  
And call thy exiled children round thy throne!  
There would I fain in contemplation gaze  
On Thy eternal beauty, and would make  
Of love one lasting canticle of praise,  
And every theme, but Thee, henceforth forsake!'

. . . . .

“The disastrous result of the late insurrection of the slaves in Cuba is well known. Betrayed, and driven into premature collision with their oppressors, the wronged and maddened bondmen were speedily crushed into subjection. Placido was arrested, and after a long hearing, was condemned to be executed, and consigned to the ‘Chapel of the Condemned.’

“How far Placido was implicated in the insurrectionary movement, it is now perhaps impossible to ascertain. The popular voice at Havana pronounced him its leader and projector; and as such he was condemned. His own bitter wrongs, the terrible recollections of his life of servitude, the impunity with which the most dreadful outrages upon the persons of slaves were inflicted,—acting upon a mind fully capable of appreciating the beauty of freedom, furnished abundant incentive to an effort for the redemption of his race, and the humiliation of his oppressors. The “Heraldo,” of Madrid, speaks of him as ‘the celebrated poet, a man of great natural genius, and beloved and appreciated by the most respectable young men of Havana.’ It accuses him of wild and ambitious projects, and states that he was intended to be the chief of the black race, after they had thrown off the yoke of bondage.

“He was executed at Havana, in July, 1844.

According to the custom in Cuba, with condemned criminals, he was conducted from prison to the 'Chapel of the Doomed.' He passed thither with singular composure, amidst a great concourse of people, gracefully saluting his numerous acquaintances. The chapel was hung with black cloth, dimly lighted. Placido was seated beside his coffin. Priests in long black robes stood around him, chaunting in sepulchral voices the service of the dead. It is an ordeal under which the stoutest-hearted and most resolute have been found to sink. After enduring it for twenty-four hours, he was led out to execution. Placido came forth calm and undismayed, holding a crucifix in his hand; he recited, in a loud, clear voice, a solemn prayer in verse, which he had composed amidst the horrors of the 'chapel.' It thrilled upon the hearts of all who heard it. I am indebted to a friend for assistance in rendering this remarkable prayer into English verse.

#### 'PRAYER OF PLACIDO.

'God of unbounded love and power eternal !  
To Thee I turn in darkness and despair ;  
Stretch forth thine arm, and from the brow infernal  
Of calumny the veil of justice tear !  
And from the forehead of my honest fame  
Pluck the world's brand of infamy and shame !

O King of kings !—my father's God ! who only  
Art strong to save, by whom is all controlled,  
Who givest the sea its waves, the dark and lonely  
Abyss of heaven its light, the north its cold,  
The air its currents, the warm sun its beams,  
Life to the flowers, and motion to the streams.

All things obey Thee ; dying or reviving,  
As Thou commandest ; all, apart from Thee,  
From Thee alone their life and power deriving,  
Sink, and are lost in vast eternity !  
Yet doth the void obey Thee ; since from nought  
This marvellous being by Thy hand was wrought.

O, merciful God !—I cannot shun thy presence,  
For, through its veil of flesh, Thy piercing eye  
Looketh upon my spirit's unsoiled essence,  
As through the pure transparence of the sky.  
Let not the oppressor clap his bloody hands,  
As o'er my prostrate innocence he stands !

But, if, alas ! it seemeth good unto Thee  
That I should perish as the guilty dies,  
That a cold, mangled corse, my foes should view me  
With hateful malice and exulting eyes,  
Speak Thou the word, and bid them shed my blood,  
Fully in me Thy will be done, O God !

“ On arriving at the fatal spot, he sat down, as ordered; on a bench, with his back to the soldiers. The multitude recollected, that in some affecting lines, written by the conspirator in prison, he had said that it would be useless to seek to kill him by

shooting his body—that his heart must be pierced ere it would cease its throbbings. At the last moment, just as the soldiers were about to fire, he rose up and gazed for an instant around and above him, on the beautiful capital of his native land, and its sail-flecked bay, on the dense crowds about him, the blue mountains in the distance, and the sky glorious with the summer sunshine. ‘Adios mundi!’ (Farewell world!) he said calmly, and sat down. The word was given, and five balls entered his body. Then it was, that amidst the groans and murmurs of the horror-stricken spectators, that he rose up once more, and turned his head to the shuddering soldiers, his face wearing an expression of superhuman courage. ‘Will no one pity me?’ he said, laying his hand over his heart. ‘Here, fire here!’ While he yet spake, two balls entered his heart, and he fell dead. Thus perished the hero-poet of Cuba. He has not fallen in vain. His genius, and his heroic death will doubtless be regarded by his race as precious legacies. To the great names of L’Ouverture and Petion the coloured man can now add that of Juan Placido.”

In biographies like these, our homage to the race transcends our homage to the man. We seize with avidity upon these memorials of the greatness of the African, a greatness not to be trampled

down by years of enslavement or of suffering, perpetually starting up and appealing to the world in vindication of its glory and humanity. Now, in the language of poetry, and more, in the nobler language of heroism, in the deeds of affection and veneration, in the strong voice, in the vehement passions of the human soul, in the sins, the sorrows, the intellect, and the affections, proclaiming the fraternity with the great tribes of recognised humanity.

## CHAPTER IV.

## CLASSIFICATIONS OF BIOGRAPHY, II.—DRAMATIC.

THERE is another kind of biography, which may be appropriately called *Dramatic*. It may be placed in opposition to historic biography, because the individual is the centre of events and actions, and events terminating in himself. His is not like the historic biography ; the mine, and fountain of influences, from himself, are perpetually widening, and expanding over the world. He is seldom the originator of stupendous events, and of mighty actions,—yet his life, perhaps, contains to all readers mighty interest. The humble sphere in which he moves, may have precluded the possibility of his diffusing his life over the world, even if he possessed power to do so ; and he therefore absorbs into himself all the life about him. There is vivid and intense action of some kind where he is ; where

he is, he is the centre of a circle. In the great drama of things, this life looks only like an episode ; but it is an episode complete in itself, and profoundly interesting amongst warriors and kings.

It has sometimes appeared to us, that the life of Gustavus Adolphus is such an episode. His life did not permanently alter the relation of history. His career dazzles by his rapid and brilliant conquests. No career can possibly be conceived more dramatic ; short—but how victorious ! It startled Europe ; it struck terror into the hearts of the Imperialists, who chaunted *Te Deums* for his death ; although they lost the battle in which he fell. But the lives most in harmony with our view of this classification, are passed usually upon a yet more contracted stage. The names probably are seldom pronounced, yet, we freshen our minds perpetually from the pictures and scenes presented to us here, as at a fountain of pure and lustrous water. The distinction we principally draw between Dramatic and Historic Biography, is, that the first develops character and scenery in relation to character, in individual relations ; but the latter delineates the origin and course of national and general effects, as effected by individual relations. The lives of travellers, rich in interest, belong especially to the dramatic class of narratives.

An incident arrests us ; it is dramatic from the

soul exhibited in it. That striking one for instance, of the corporal at the siege of Toulon. Bonaparte needed a corporal that could write in the heat of the battle ; one instantly stepped forward, and wrote a dispatch. At the moment of finishing it a ball fell, and scattered some earth on the paper. "Well," exclaimed the corporal, "I shall have no need of sand!" That exclamation was the signal for his elevation from the ranks; and he shortly became Duke of Abrantes, and Governor General of Illyria.

A dramatic life concerns itself with the investigation of the motives of conduct ; we are most desirous, therefore, of hearing a great man speak for himself, when he speaks to us in confidence. Sometimes men write and publish their own biography, ages after they have been dust. The publication of Cromwell's letters is a personal history of this kind ; so also the Chronicle of Jocelyn de Brakelonda, published by the Camden Society. While equal to them in historical importance, and equal in dramatic and descriptive interest, is the diary of Alexander Jaffray, the provost of Aberdeen, one of the Scottish Commissioners to Charles II., and a member of Cromwell's parliament. This volume, many years since, fell into the hands of the Barclays of Ury—was discovered a short time back, and published. It is the experience of one man, of the

ground over which he travelled, and the persons with whom he came into contact and acquaintance, in England ; but its documentary and social interest is invaluable. For one life of a period, well told, admits us to all the essential points necessary for forming an opinion upon the whole period.

All biography is romantic and dramatic ; if the secret of the life could be penetrated, some lives have a whole drama or romance in a few pages. The following has some foundation, and may be repeated here as something more than a tale ; an interesting guide to the state of justice in the period of which it speaks.

A gentleman, who possessed an estate worth about £500 a year, in the eastern part of England, had two sons. The oldest, being of a rambling disposition, went abroad. After several years his father died ; when the younger son destroyed the will, and seized upon the estate. He gave out that his eldest brother was dead, and bribed false witnesses to attest the truth of it. In the course of time his elder brother returned, but came home in miserable circumstances. His younger brother repulsed him with scorn, and told him he was an impostor and cheat. He asserted that his real brother was dead long ago, and he could bring witnesses to prove it. The poor fellow having neither money nor friends, was in a most

dismal situation. He went round the parish making complaints; and at last to a lawyer, who, when he had heard the poor man's story, replied "You have nothing to give me; if I undertake your cause and lose it, it will bring me into disgrace, as all the wealth and evidence is on your brother's side. But, however, I will undertake your cause on this condition—you shall enter into an obligation to pay me one thousand guineas, if I gain the estate for you. If I lose it, I know the consequences, and I venture with my eyes open." Accordingly he entered into an action against the younger brother, which was to be tried at the next general assizes at Chelmsford, in Essex.

The lawyer having engaged in the cause of the young man, and stimulated by the prospect of a thousand guineas, set his wits to work to contrive the best method to gain his end. At last he hit upon this happy thought, that he would consult the first Judge of his age, Lord Chief Justice Hale. Accordingly he hastened up to London, and laid open the cause and all the circumstances. The judge, who was a great lover of justice, heard it attentively; and promised him all the assistance in his power. The lawyer having taken leave, the judge contrived his matters so as to finish all his business at the King's Bench, before the assizes began at Chelmsford. When within a short dis-

tance of the place he dismissed his horse, and sought for a single house. He found one occupied by a miller. After some conversation, and making himself quite agreeable, he proposed to the miller to change clothes with him. As the judge had a very good suit on, the man had no reason to object.

Accordingly, the judge shifted himself from top to toe, and put on a complete suit of the miller's best. Armed with a miller's hat, shoes, and stick, away he marched to Chelmsford, where he had procured good lodging, suitable for the assizes that should come on the next day.

When the trials came on, he walked like an ignorant country fellow, backwards and forwards along the county hall. He had a thousand eyes within him, and when the court began to fill, he found out the poor fellow who was the plaintiff.

As soon as he came into the hall the miller drew up to him. "Honest friend," said he, "how is your cause like to do to-day?"

"Why," replied the plaintiff, "my cause is in a very precarious situation, and if I lose it I am ruined for life."

"Well, honest friend," replied the miller, "will you take my advice? I will let you into a secret, which perhaps you do not know; every Englishman has a right and privilege to except any one juryman through the whole twelve;—now do you

insist upon your privilege, without giving a reason why, and if possible, get me chosen in his room; and I will do you all the service in my power."

Accordingly, when the clerk had called over the names of the jurymen, the plaintiff excepted one of them. The judge on the bench was highly offended with this liberty.

"What do you mean," says he, "by excepting that gentleman?"

"I mean, my lord, to assert my privilege as an Englishman, without giving a reason why."

The judge, who had been highly bribed, in order to conceal it by a show of candour, and having a confidence in the superiority of his party, said—

"Well, sir, as you claim your privilege in one instance, I will grant it. Whom would you wish to have in the room of that man excepted?"

After a short time taken in consideration—

"My lord," says he, "I wish to have an honest man chosen in;" and looking round the court—"my lord, there is that miller in the court, we will have him if you please." Accordingly the miller was chosen.

As soon as the clerk of the court had given them all their oaths, a little dextrous fellow came into the apartment, and slipped ten Caroluses into the hands of eleven jurymen, and gave the miller but five. He observed that they were all bribed as

well as himself, and said to his next neighbour, in a soft whisper,

“How much have you got?”

“Ten pieces,” said he.

But he concealed what he had got himself. The cause was opened by the plaintiff's counsel; and all the scraps of evidence they could pick up were adduced in his favour. The younger brother was provided with a great number of witnesses and pleaders, all plentifully bribed as well as the judge. The evidence deposed that they were in the self-same county when the brother died, and saw him buried. The counsellors pleaded upon accumulated evidence; and every thing went with a full tide in favour of the younger brother. The judge summed up the evidence with great gravity and deliberation; “And now, gentlemen of the jury,” said he, “lay your heads together, and bring in a verdict as you shall deem most just.”

They waited for a few minutes, before they determined in favour of the younger brother. The judge said—

“Gentlemen, are you agreed; and who shall speak for you?”

“We are all agreed, my lord,” replied one, “our foreman shall speak for us.”

“Hold, my lord,” replied the miller, “we are not all agreed.”

"Why?" said the judge in a surly manner, "what is the matter with you? what reason have you for disagreeing?"

"I have several reasons, my lord," replied the miller; "the first is, they have given all the gentlemen of the jury ten broad pieces of gold, and me but five, which is not fair. Besides I have many objections to make to the false reasoning of the pleaders, and the contradictory evidence of the witnesses." Upon this the miller began a discourse that discovered such vast penetration of judgment, such extensive knowledge of the law, and expressed with such energetic and manly eloquence that astonished the judge, and the whole court.

As he was going on with his powerful demonstrations, the Judge, in a surprise of soul, stopped him.

"Where did you come from, and who are you?"

"I come from Westminster Hall," replied the miller; "my name is Matthew Hale: I am Lord Chief-Justice of the King's Bench. I have observed the iniquity of your proceedings of this day; therefore come down from a seat which you are no way worthy to hold. You are one of the corrupt parties in this iniquitous business. I will come up this moment, and try the whole over again."

Accordingly Sir Matthew went up, with his miller's dress and hat on, began the trial from the commencement, and searched every circumstance of truth and falsehood. He evinced the eldest brother's title to the estate, from the contradictory evidence of the witnesses, and the false reasoning of the pleaders ; unravelled all the sophistry to the bottom, and gained a complete victory in favour of truth and justice.

Now, whether or not there is a deviation from strict biographic truth, the spirit of this story is true ; it has dramatic truth, truth of character, and truth of relation. This is like that same Sir Matthew Hale, who himself dismissed a jury, because he suspected them to be packed to carry a cause, and was, it was said, told by Cromwell, he was not fit to be a judge ; he replied, with his usual meekness, "That is very true."

The romance of biography has yet to be written, not in the spirit of the mere romancist, the wonder-seeker, but in the disposition to make the wonderful and the unusual tributary to instruction ; for unless instruction and improvement be the object of the perusal of the life, whether it be in the pages of the novel, or the history, or the biography, the reader becomes merely the tippler of mental alcohol, a drunkard intoxicating himself with the unnatural fire-waters of diseased

morbid excitement—the fumes of surprise and sensuality. These have mostly been the great requisites demanded by the multitude of readers, and the biography that can supply them is to such persons a precious morsel, and such biographies there are. There are lives that, like poison-plants, spread a vaporous pestilence, even when the book is not itself seen. They might unfit the mind for realities, by the perpetual presentation of the startling and the wonderful, and these introduced out of all character, as if the author laboured to surprise his readers—having before him as an object, not so much to relate the story of a life, as to convulse and startle the reader with unexpected emotion.

Now this is not dramatic biography ; for it is not in unison with the character of things. It may be romantic, and perhaps is to the student useful. Not that it is desirable to gaze upon the deformities of humanity, but that some lives remind us of *post mortem* examinations, in which the physician has in view the analysis of some one peculiar form of disease, and studies its symptoms,—not out of love to the dead, who, nevertheless, he can well afford to pity—but from sympathy with the living.

We may notice some of the peculiarities of this class of writing presently, as it affects psycho-

logical study. Meantime, the annals of biography are not wanting in names suggesting all that a morbid excitement can crave, for food of the startling and wonderful. Psalmanazar, for instance; or, Cagliostro Paracelsus; or, Dr. Dee. Wonderfully do these lives illustrate to us what boundless patience, talent, industry, and tact, a man may display, to consecrate and give vitality to an imposture; when probably a tenth portion expended upon some truthful pursuit, instead of covering his name with obloquy, might have made him a useful member of society, and handed down his name with honour to posterity.

Such reflections arise from the perusal of the life of the first mentioned of the above persons, George Psalmanazar: few names have more romantic interest than his,—if falsehood, carried to the last climax of imagination, invention, and impudence can be romantic,—of great and varied learning, (one of the writers of the *Universal History*)—the inventor of a language which he gave out to be the language of the Island of Formosa, and the describer of the manners of a country altogether in “*terra incognita*.”

Psalmanazar drew up, in Latin, an account of the Island of Formosa, a consistent and entertaining work, which was translated and hurried through the press, had a rapid sale, and is quoted

without suspicion by Buffon : while his adherence to certain singularities in his manners and diet gathered from popular opinion or from books, considerably strengthened the imposition : for the carrying on of which he was eminently qualified, by possessing a command of countenance, temper, and recollection, which no perplexity, rough usage, or cross-examination could ruffle or derange.

The Bishop of Oxford sent him to study in the famous university, and on his return to London he drew up, at the desire of his ecclesiastical friends, a version of the Church Catechism, in what he called his native tongue, which was examined by the learned, found regular and grammatical, and pronounced a real language, and no counterfeit.—By these and other conciliating arts, the supplies of his patrons continued liberal, and he was enabled to lead an idle, and in some instances, when he was thrown off his guard, an extravagant life. The person of our Formosan was far from being attractive ; but his qualities, it is said, were thought otherwise by some fashionable ladies, one of whom is reported to have exclaimed—

“ I positively shall never be easy till I have been introduced to this strange man with a hard name, who has fled from Japan, and eats raw meat.”

By-and bye the imposture of his relations began

to appear ; yet all his fictions have never been well cleared up. Leigh Hunt says of him—

“ Upon the whole, Psalmanazar appears to have been a clever, weak, and not bad-hearted man, whose vanity supported him in his falsehood, till he got tired of it, and then took extreme pity on himself, and so was drowned in tears. The best point about him, and which shows his nature to have been good in the main, was his being able to sit down quietly and earn an honest living.”

But, if the reader would see this spirit of romance in the chronicles of biography, let him procure, and read, the one hundred romances of real life, of Leigh Hunt. It is the intention of the “present editor,” to publish even another volume ; for real life furnishes romances by thousands, rather than by hundreds. Who would not wish to read, how Felix Peretti, the ignorant son of a poor peasant in Italy, rose to be the mighty Prince of Italy, and the Pontiff of Europe. How Henry Willey lived a recluse, in the very heart of London ; his heart shocked by intended unkindness to him, yet bearing with him to his hermitage love to his fellow-men, and desire to alleviate their sorrows. How Ripperda, born a Dutchman, became a Spanish Catholic Minister, and died a bashaw. How revenge has dogged its victim for years, assumed the priestly habit,

the better to conceal the motive, and slain its object at the very grates of the confessional. How the dead have come forth, or those who seemed dead, and lived to dance at marriage feasts. Romances of generosity, romances of love and goodness; and questionless, the interest of some paragraphs from the life of humanity, has a high and wonderful tone of interest to every phase of character. Philosophers may speculate, the curious gape, and the human find some shades of brotherhood, and learn.

Looking over the list of so called *great men*, we shall, perhaps, find that they may all be arranged in two divisions:—

First in eminence, in worth, in the memory of mankind, we place the originators of ideas—those who project their shadows over futurity, the pioneers through the the forests and rocks of time, the Columbuses of the intellect, the first who dared to adventure into strange seas of thought, and inquiry, and action; the men who ploughed up the desolation, and first planted the seeds of future harvests.

The study of the uses of great men has led to some conclusions with which we have no sympathy: In a clever article in the “Foreign Quarterly Review,” some years since, we were told—

“A great man is a result, and not a cause; he

is created, if we may so speak, by the spirit of the age which he embodies and represents. But on this subject we cannot do better than quote the words of Victor Cousin :—" A great man, whatever may be the kind of his greatness, whatever the epoch of the world in which he makes his appearance, comes to represent an idea, such an idea, and not any other idea, at the precise time when that idea is worth representing, and neither before it or after it ; consequently he appears when he ought to appear, and he disappears when nothing is left for him to do : he is born and he dies in due season. When nothing great is to be done, the existence of a great man is impossible. In fact, what is a great man ? He is the representative of a power not his own ; for all power merely individual is pitiful, and no man yields to another man : he yields only to the representative of a general power. When, therefore, no such general power exists, or when it exists no longer ; when it fails or falls into decay, what strength can its representative possess ? Hence, also, no human power can cause a great man to be born or die before his hour is come ; it cannot be displayed, it can neither be advanced nor put back, for he existed only because he had his work to do, and he exists no more, only because nothing is left for him to do, and to wish to continue his existence would be to wish to con-

tinue a part which has been acted to the end and exhausted. A soldier who had seated himself upon a throne was once told: 'Sire, the education of your son should be watched over with great attention; he must be educated so that he may replace you.' 'Replace me!' answered he, 'I could not replace myself; I am the child of circumstances. The same man was deeply sensible that the power which animated him was not his own; that it was lent him for a specific purpose, and until a certain hour, the approach of which he could neither hasten nor retard. It is said he was somewhat given to fatalism. You will remark that all great men have been more or less fatalists; the error is in the form, not at the foundation of the thought. They feel that, in fact, they do not exist on their own account; they possess the consciousness of an immense power; and, being unable to ascribe the honour of it to themselves, they refer it to a higher power, which uses them as instruments in accordance with its own ends. Not only are great men given to fatalism, they are also addicted to superstitions peculiar to themselves. Hence, also, it comes to pass that great men, who in action show decision and an admirable ardour, often hesitate and slumber before they are roused to action; the sentiment of necessity, the evidence of their mission, must strike them forcibly; they seem to feel that until then

they should act only as individuals, and that their power is not present with them."

This view of matters appears to result from not studying closely the various characters of great men. We may lay their classifications, certainly, in the sense in which Cousin speaks. Neither Columbus, nor Bacon, nor Berkeley, nor Plato, nor Milton (as a poet), nor Shakspeare, were the result of circumstances; no, these men, we have said, plant the seeds of things, they proclaim their idea, and leave it to leaven the world; they sow their seed, and leave it to bring forth its fruit; they are not often men of action; they consecrate their lives to contemplation, invention, and discovery; they learn to labour, and to wait; they are absorbed in one thought—it is their life, their immortality; they are the "victims and the votaries of the ideal," and shall we make such men the result of circumstances? If the world bid ever so high for another Homer, or another Dante, or another Richter, would the world be nearer the having such a man or men?—In a sense, yes; because the universal demand would imply the power of reciprocity,—and the wonderful advance of the race to that point when such men would cease to be so extraordinary as they are now: but, in the true sense, no; the world would be no nearer the possession, whatever they might bid now for their

appearance, while their advent to us in the infancy of times and societies, or in the circle of crude manners, proves how little the world, or external circumstances, had to do with the education of their wonderful inner life and being.

Ordinarily, the lives of these men lack interest; their words are better preserved than their lives: a few spent their days in action,—but they have usually lived in a silent land. The Mythic age was the day of giants; concealed as they are from us; yet they give intimations of the genius, as well as the power of their spirits. Indeed their power over men resulted from their height above them; hence the chieftains and warriors of antiquity were legislators. Theseus in Greece, Numa in Rome, Thor in the Saxon Forest, and Dunwallo in Britain. Mythology speaks to us in hints; we may safely receive the profile, and reject the colours. The man however, who serves the world best, lives frequently in a hermitage; he derives his wisdom from self-knowledge and communion. We know little of Plato, but that little is not interesting from its important action; and Kant, the philosopher of Konigsburg, is said never to have been four miles from his home in his life; yet all the philosophers of Europe hushed their voices to hear him speak, either in admiration or curiosity. What do we know of Gilbert, the

author of the treatise on the magnet? yet his book had results. The great Seers are not very noticeable men, for they are stationary; occasionally the finger-post walks before us, doing, as well as pointing. One of these was Charlemagne, whose footprint has not worn out of the ground he passed over in Europe yet; so also Columbus, that great, and patient, and hardy sea king; greater than he hath not often been among us; that patient, earnest face, that calm and dignified port, that clear eye, and much-enduring frame, great in action, great in thought. We venerate his magnanimity alike in his glory and his gloom. Cadmus, Roger Bacon, Faust,—all these men were, and still are, to us human pillars of fire,—before all men we should certainly call most great,—by their invention, their vision, and heroism, illuminating the pathway of man through the desert, and promising him an entrance into a land of knowledge, and happiness, and liberty. Our estimate of greatness will be proportioned to our emotion of gratitude; we shall yield most homage to those from whom we have received most; the world's greatest benefactors are surely worthy of the world's highest regard: that light is surely the most brilliant whose beam penetrates and spreads into the most dim recesses, and over the largest expanse.

A second class of great men may be best described as *adroiti*. They are the captains of ideas, movements, and agitations. They do not originate thought; they do not invent, but they harmonise. They use the tools far better, perhaps, than the men who have invented. To such men, the remark of Victor Cousin, may well be applied.

"They are strong, but wary; they have no inkling for the crown of martyrdom; they seize upon the conclusions of minds, which have gone before them; they interpret the popular will; these are the men who strike the hour of time."

"Some men's watches" said Talleyrand, "go a few minutes faster than those of other men; and on those few minutes, frequently hang the glory, or the ruin of an empire, or state. Such men are frequently put down as absurd theorists, because, as one has said, 'they will not halt until the boys come up to them;' they prepare public opinion, they diffuse thought abroad; for what we call public opinion, depends upon the thinkings and reasonings of the most intelligent of the community; and these again, derive their opinions from the man whose perceptions long since understood the necessities of the times. The main quality of their mind is nimbleness; they plough with Sampson's heifers; their strength is neither in depth, nor in intensity, but in encyclopedicalness, in

variety. Voltaire was, in an eminent degree, a various man; his knowledge was universal, and his ability to simplify knowledge was commensurate to his attainments. He had something to say and to do in every region of literature. Mirabeau, again, is a fine picture of the adroit man; this fierce and unprincipled being hastened the French Revolution, and he might have retarded it, had he but lived a years longer. His father well described him as the "swallower of all formularies;" and he in a single sentence, left a full length character of himself. When he requested his secretary to do for him some difficult thing, the secretary answered him, "Monsieur, it is impossible." Impossible! replied he, "never name to me that blockhead of a word." This was the character of the man,—an eye that did not so much see as absolutely glare through the sophistries of things, and through the sophistries of men, too, when he styled the French general, "Grandison Cromwell Lafayette." Do we not feel that every other word would be vain to convey a better idea of the man who sought to combine in one, heroism and dandyism?

Men of this order of mind are born to ride on the whirlwind, if not to direct the storm; the structure of their mind does not astonish, does not amaze us; their performances fill us with wonder;

but our sentiments towards them are prompted by no profound and awful veneration. It is the doom of spirits of this order that their success depends upon their unscrupulousness; they can never tolerate silence; they must edge themselves or strive themselves into power. The life of Napoleon is the life of every one of the class—an amazingly enlarged edition, with magnificent illustrations, appropriately coloured with battle fires and warlike splendours. Great orators, great statesmen, great merchants, are all of the same order of mind; vivid speech, vivid vision, and insolent irrepressible dogmatism, and as frequently remorseless dishonesty. Is there not a likeness between the features of Demosthenes, Lorenzo de Medici, Napoleon, and Lord Clive? The likeness is not empirical; it is the resemblance of powerful and versatile minds, in whose leading characteristics we read the elements of character necessary to the subjection and triumph over obstacles of all kinds. The enchanters who bind nations by their spells, would seldom succeed if they never did “highly unless they did holily.” Prophet and priest, quiet contemplative natures would sicken and turn with disgust from what these men would deem the legitimate steps to power.

Some lives are pervaded by this *perpetual willing*

*and doing* ; we cannot select them,—they are not exceptions to the usual current of the life ; many of the lives published very recently are of this kind—those of Sir Fowell Buxton, Dr. Arnold, Dr. Channing, William Allen—not to mention others ; over the whole of these lives is diffused a spirit which captivates the readers. It is not so much in citations that this healthful affluence of noble-mindedness is seen ; it gave a breadth of view, an independence of being, to their whole conduct. The truest lives are ever thus : not the man who does a great thing now and then, but he who is perfectly rounded and sculptured in his whole life, is worthy of our imitation, and deserves to have his life recorded. The goodness of some men is spasmodic and hysterical ; the goodness of others is orderly and consistent. Perhaps the great reason is in the sense of duty, which is the basis of all real character : while some are merely the weather-vanes of impulse and emotion, a life according to law is ever the same : these are the most healthful biographies ; usually in them there is nothing eccentric and extravagant ; there is, perhaps, no great demand upon our wonder,—but the duties of their being move, as the ordinances of Nature move, in silence, and with a subdued cheerfulness. In the perusal of such books, we do not feel that we are looking at anything extraor-

dinary,—yet the impression of the whole upon our minds is irresistible, *and never forgotten.*

The most romantic incidents of biographic writing are those which result from the strong and forcible mastery of will, giving to the whole life energy and completeness. Many lives arrest us by an incident. One day,\* in the year 1697, the Duke of Marlborough happened to be in the village of Saardam : he visited the dock-yard of one Mynheer Calf, a rich ship-builder. He was immediately struck by the appearance of a journeyman at work there ; he was a large, powerful man, dressed in a red woollen shirt, and duck trowsers, with a sailor's hat ; he was sitting upon a rough log of wood, with an adze in his hand ; the man's features were bold and regular, and his dark brown hair fell in natural curls about his neck ; a keen, quick eye indicated remarkable restlessness : he was engaged in earnest conversation with some strangers, during which his face became contorted with the evidences of latent passion. The duke inquired the name of this remarkable workman ; it was Peter Baas, a foreign workman, of remarkable mechanical skill and industry. He began to converse with him, and, while so engaged, a messenger entered, holding a voluminous letter in his hand ; Peter started up,

\* Characteristics of Genius.

tore off the seal, and hastily devoured the contents, while the duke walked away unnoticed. He knew that, in that disguise, he beheld the Emperor of all the Russias—a man who, having just succeeded to the throne of a quarter of the globe, had descended from it with the noble intention of qualifying himself to ascend it again, and from it to enlarge the boundaries of his people's civilization. The history of the world scarcely affords another instance of so extraordinary a combination of action and will.

Very few of the princes who have obtained the name of great, either in ancient or in modern times, can be compared to this illustrious, yet almost barbarous man. The very incident by which we have introduced him to the reader is an illustration of life; he illustrates the power of the mind over the body; he is a cyclop among kings; he strides over Europe, like a Titan, marching swiftly from place to place, not to conquer, but to learn. Not to conquer? Yes, to dig in the mines for the metal, to smelt, and forge, and fashion it into a sword with which to go forth to the war against ignorance and barbarity. Was this man the creature of circumstances? Was this man created by the call and the necessity of his people? Did the circumference arouse the centre? Or was it the centre that radiated to the circumference?

While Louis XIV. was frivolously smirking to his own image in France, making everywhere a looking-glass for his vanity, and laying the fearful train of future revolutions—while this man, a prince, not without a will or power, was showering his rockets and his fireworks in delectable pleasantries over a gunpowder mine, Peter was blowing a trumpet, to sound through future ages, calling a nation from a wilderness. He had burst away from the bonds whereunto his peers had sought to enslave him; and he determined now to make this savage desert a sea-port and harbour for proud ships; he determined to conquer the cut-throat janizaries, knavish priests, and unlettered Voyards.

The impression of his life upon a youth is like that of a gymnotic eel. With this prince to think is to will, to will is to do. We hear of but little of his designs upon the Crimea, until the key of the Palus Mæotis was in his possession. How the Dutchmen of the yard of Mynheer Calf must have stared at this indefatigable learner, who seemed determined to know every thing, and if possible, something besides. Those quiet Dutchmen, he roused them from their sleeping and their smoking for a time with his everlasting "Wat is dat? Dat wil ill zein." Who was this? for they did not know him. Harlequin, in the disguise of a carpenter, could not have astonished them more.

Hints, indeed, might fly about, that this boisterous personage was a foreign prince ; but certainly there was little that could strike their imaginations (if Dutchmen have imaginations) that resembled the tales heard of princes. This carpenter, with his load of timber on his back, knocking down those indisposed to stand out of his way ; with strange contortions of body and of face, flying from place to place, from occupation to occupation, any one might suppose, forgetful of previous lessons, but by and bye giving evidence enough that every lesson was carefully treasured up, to be brought forth to interest in his own country, for the civilization of his own people upon his return. His intellectual appetite, it has been well said, was most voracious ; it was ostrich-like, but his digestion was like that of the ostrich. In a very short time he perfectly mastered the Dutch language, in order that the medium for the transmission of knowledge to him from his teachers might be complete : and then he leaped with avidity from study to study, yet colouring and giving substance to his mind by the peculiarities of each pursuit—engineering, mathematics, and the science of fortification ; surgery, with all its accompaniments of bleeding, cupping, and tooth-drawing, and tapping for dropsy. He was indefatigable in enquiring into the structure of every variety of factory and

machinery. corn-mills, oil-mills, tar-mills, paper-mills. He took all these various methods to his own country, and spread the light they contained over the benighted people of his own dominions. Before his departure from the yard, he laid down, and built, from his own draught and model, a sixty gun ship, at much of the carpentry of which he wrought with his own hands—declared by competent judges to be an admirable specimen of naval architecture.

Of course a man like this, upon the throne, was not likely to be any more a dullard, than when in the shipwright's yard. The Princess Sophia headed a revolt ; he hung up three or four of them in front of her window, had another half dozen hung and quartered, and another half dozen broken on the wheel ; he determined to civilize the dress of his subjects—the men should not wear petticoats and whiskers half a yard long ; so he established a body of military tailors and barbers at each gate of Moscow, heedless of the curses of the priests, who denounced him, of course, as Antichrist. He crushed Charles the XII. at Paltowa ; he annihilated the ecclesiastical power ; he raised himself to a most independent autocracy ; and became, not only Emperor, but Pontiff. Wonderful indeed was the might of this man ; strong beyond all parallel on the throne, the exercise of his will-

ing and his doing halo such a man as this with mythic mists; rearer of cities, builder of ships, blacksmith, carpenter, legislator, warrior, inventor, civilizer—and we instantly comprehend how possible it is to worship the human in dark ages. He illuminates for us the mysteries of antiquity.

## CHAPTER V.

## CLASSIFICATIONS OF BIOGRAPHY, III.—PICTORIAL.

SOME lives are *pictorial*: their interest consists alone in the minute painting of the costume and the manners of the writer's time. This is usually more graphic than in the narrations of more general history; the incidents are trifling, and in the main all-unimportant to any general end; but they are true in the tone of the colour, and they inform us more accurately of the *physique* of the times than far better books. Such books, perhaps, are neither truly history or biography, but the description of the folds of the drapery of history. The diary of that twaddling old gossipper, Pepys, is thus most valuable; for this man we can have no kind of respect; but he sets down the circumstances of the events as they transpire, with such clear and accurate detail; he keeps no diary of thought, but

simply puts down what he sees ; he utters no feelings, but in a word or two introduces us to the scenery of both the out-of-doors and in-doors life of the time. And so the "Memoirs of the Count de Grammont," loose and adulterate as they are, have this excellence, that without any attempt at colouring, without any labouring for effect, but simply by the introduction of anecdote, and the plain narration, they give to us a far more painful view of the grossness of the court, and the manners of the nobility of the time of Charles II., than could ever be conveyed from the merely so called history. All that a man puts down, and says "I saw," is life-writing biography. The chronicles of Froissart, and others, therefore, may be thus mentioned ; and a very opposite book indeed, "Boswell's Life of Johnson," is not only valuable as giving a very full and striking portrait of a great man—perhaps the most full-length portrait of any man—it is pictorial, too ; we have a better idea, after reading it, of the life of the time ; we know better what they did in Boswell's and Johnson's day. So says Thomas Carlyle,—“This book of Boswell's will give us more real insight into the history of England, during those days, than twenty other books falsely entitled ‘Histories :’ which take to themselves that special aim. The thing I want to see is not Red-book Lists,

and Court Calendars, and Parliamentary Registers, but the life of man in England; what men did, thought, suffered, and enjoyed; the form, especially the spirit of their terrestrial existence, its outward environment, its inward principle; how, and what it was; whence it proceeded, whither it was tending."

In their ambitious attempts to set off renowned heroes, life-writers have usually forgotten that they are linked to us most by the depictment of common sympathies and circumstances. The dress of a life is not so important as the life itself, but it frequently enables us to understand it better; the description is very often something between the reader and an abstraction; the qualities of men are brought home to us by their association with sensible objects; minute touches bring out into fullness the whole picture. Many a life, many a history, most valuable in itself, is unknown to us; because, in the narration there was so little concern manifested in matters interesting to the simplest tastes.

There is another section, however, of pictorial life-writing, to which we may give the name of Household Biography. 'It is anecdotal; it is confined to some little incident; but then that incident, it may be, lightens the history of something very much beloved by us—shows to us the

origin of some beautiful, long-living thought.—Perhaps all that can be said about some person may be condensed in a few lines,—but then those few words offer to us the solution of a doubt, or paint vividly some ancient manners,—or preserve, as in a museum, the lineaments of a dear, old, departed day. This is the principal interest of anecdote, which is a kind of biography of the most pertinent, condensed, and instructive character.—Every reader knows how frequently, from a simple saying, or hint, or some very short description, a far more extended conception may be formed of a life, than is frequently to be obtained from the most voluminous biography. A single ray illuminates a dark chamber, and a single remark will sometimes pour a flood of light through a whole life-time; and an incident, too, sometimes shines before us with this unaffected prettiness; there is so much reality about it, it charms us, and adds an additional interest to what was already interesting.

The following may be cited as an illustrative instance:—

Mr. Shepherd, the respectable and well-informed conservator of the Botanical gardens at Liverpool, gives the following account of the introduction of that elegant little flowering shrub, the Fuchsia, into our English green-houses and parlour-win-

dows. Old Mr. Lee, a nurseryman and gardener, near London, well known fifty or sixty years ago, was one day showing his variegated treasures to a friend, who suddenly turned to him, and declared,

“ Well, you have not in your collection a prettier flower than I saw this morning at Wapping.”

“ No!—and pray what was this phoenix like ?”

“ Why, the plant was elegant, and the flowers hung in rows, like tassels, from the pendant branches ; their colour the richest crimson ; in the centre a fold of deep purple,” and so forth.

Particular directions being demanded and given, Mr. Lee posted off to Wapping, where he at once perceived that the plant was new in this part of the world. He saw, and admired. Entering the house, he said—

“ My good woman, this is a nice plant—I should like to buy it.”

“ I could not sell it for no money, for it was brought me from the West Indies by my husband, who has now left again, and I must keep it for his sake.”

“ But I must have it.”

“ No, sir!”

“ Here,” emptying his pocket, “ here are gold, silver, and copper ;” (this stock was something more than eight guineas).

“ Well-a-day, but this is a power of money, sure and sure.”

"'Tis yours, and the plant is mine ; and, my good dame, you shall have one of the first young ones I rear, to keep for your husband's sake."

" Alack, alack !"

" You shall, I say, by Jove !"

A coach was called, in which was safely deposited our florist, and his seemingly dear purchase. His first work was to pull off, and utterly destroy, every vestige of blossom and bud ; it was divided into cuttings, which were forced in bark-beds and hot-beds ; were re-divided, and subdivided. Every effort was used to multiply the plant. By the commencement of the next flowering season, Mr. Lee was the delighted possessor of three hundred fuchsia plants, all giving promise of blossom. The two which opened first were removed into his show-house. A lady came :—

" Why, Mr. Lee, my dear Mr. Lee, where did you get this charming flower ?"

" Hem ! 'tis a new thing, my lady—pretty, is it not ?"

" Pretty ! 'tis beautiful ! Its price ?"

" A guinea—thank your ladyship ;" and one of the two plants stood proudly in her ladyship's boudoir.

" My dear Charlotte, where did you get ?"—  
&c., &c.

" Oh ! 'tis a new thing ; I saw it at old Lee's ; pretty, is it not ?"

"Pretty! 'tis beautiful! Its price?"

"A guinea; there was another left."

The visitor's horses smoked off to the suburb; a third flowering plant stood on the spot whence the first had been taken. The second guinea was paid, and the second chosen fuchsia adorned the drawing-room of her second ladyship. The scene was repeated, as new comers saw, and were attracted by the beauty of the plant. New chariots flew to the gates of old Lee's nursery-ground. Two fuchsias, young, graceful, and bursting into healthy flower, were constantly seen on the same spot in his repository.

He neglected not to gladden the faithful sailor's wife by the promised gift; but, ere the flower-season closed, three hundred golden guineas chinked in his purse, the produce of the single shrub of the widow of Wapping—the reward of the taste, decision, skill, and perseverance of old Mr. Lee.

## CHAPTER VI.

## CLASSIFICATIONS OF BIOGRAPHY, IV.—DIDACTIC.

SOME lives are purely *didactic*. While reading them, we sit before the professor's chair, and listen to prelections. Not that there is an ostentatious parade of instruction ; the best lessons are ever conveyed unobtrusively ; they are given rather as an influence and an example, than as an oration. The life of Michael Angelo is of this character : a sentence from his lips reveals to us his whole life : he teaches us by his own teachable spirit. This great man, one of the princes—if it be not more appropriate to call him a high priest of the art,—was ever learning. The two ends of his life meet in one.

The first anecdote of him shows him, when only a painter's apprentice, and desirous of painting a fish, going to the fish-market to look at the eyes

of a fish, to notice its colour, and the delicacy of its fins.

When the Cardinal Farnese found him solitary, one day, amidst the ruins of the Coliseum, and expressed his surprise, he said, "I go yet to school." One of his last drawings is a sketch of an old man with a beard, in a go-cart, an hour-glass before him, and the motto, *Ancora imparo* (I still learn).\*

Certainly, every life is didactic. Every life, or the model of it, might be thrown into the form of an aphorism; every life has some central lesson, and this might be obtained, distilled, and presented to the reader. A ruling passion, or a ruling principle, governs each; it is sometimes thickly overlaid with the biographer's style, and wrapped round with bandaging words; but even through all it may be detected. Volcanoes would be vainly covered with pie-crust,—and the impulses that have made a life worthy to be written at all, cannot well be hidden, even by the worst and most ragged biographer: the central thought, the leading emotion, disseminates itself over the life.

How delightful to find one really so! to read the history of a mind thus complete! How rare to find one! and how still more rare to find the

\* Characteristics of Painters, by Henry Reeve.

fingers able to hold the pen to record such a life—a life like that of Canova; so pure in its devotion to art! so lofty in its sympathies! so sublime and self-denying in its aspirations! so full of lessons which may be serviceable, not only to the prosecution of the artist's life, but like all true lessons, available for every ardent disciple in every school.

Or a life like that of Washington—a life of such calm, high wisdom; a man who could not be moved to corruption, or to triumph; the model of a senator, whose life, ever since his death, has been reading to us lessons of the æsthetics of government. Few names have attained to a place of such importance in history, as Washington.—Its simplicity is astonishing to eyes accustomed only to the pomp of modern princes, and to the glare of modern warriors.

Such lives as these are, in the memory, like impressive paintings, in subdued colour. Turn to them whenever we will, we find the mingled prudence and power, which they develope, have lessons for the government and mastery of our own lives; and we recognise in this, one of the uses of superior men,—the subjecting us to the monarchy of their higher example and will,—the acknowledgment of their more lofty method of life.

In this didactic classification of great lives, it is instructive to contrast the life *with*, and the life

*without* method ; and it will be found, the acting with or without plan,—the submission of the life to some great ruling principles, or the holding it loose to every impulse—this makes the great difference between men and men. The literary life has unfortunately abounded with illustrations of this methodless being ; and, as this forms one of the prime lessons of biography, we may linger over some illustrations, frequently as ludicrous as they are affecting. An anecdote or two often are as lamps to the knowledge of a whole life-biography.

The life of Samuel Taylor Coleridge was one mournfully without method ; and to this is to be ascribed the fact, that he did so little, compared with his vast endowments. Look at him in early life, when he and Southey were lecturing together at Bristol. He had requested his friend to permit him to deliver a lecture, for which the future laureate was engaged, “On the Rise, Progress, and Decline of the Roman Empire ;” and then troubled himself no farther about the matter.

“At the usual hour,” says Mr. Cottle, “the room was thronged ; the moment for commencement arrived ; patience was preserved for a quarter—for half an hour—but still no lecturer. At length it was communicated to the impatient assembly, that a circumstance, sincerely to be re-

gretted, would prevent Mr. Coleridge giving his lecture that evening. Some few present learned the truth; but the major part retired, under the impression that Mr. Coleridge had either broken his leg, or that some severe domestic affliction had happened. His rather habitual absence of mind, with the little importance he generally attached to engagements, renders it likely, that at this very time he might have been found, composedly smoking his pipe, and lost in profound musings on his divine Susquehanah."

In 1814, he was engaged to deliver, in Bristol, his lectures on Shakspeare,—those lectures so suggestive and important. He accordingly took his journey from London, by the coach, in order to arrive in time for their delivery. The engagement was expressly to commence on a certain day; and considerable efforts were making to assemble an audience; but, on the way, Coleridge discovered that the coach contained the sister of a friend of his, in North Wales, whither she was going.—By the time he reached Bath, he had made up his mind, that it was his duty to leave the good people of Bristol to form their own judgment on Shakspeare, while he went forward to North Wales with the lady, and set her down at her brother's door, as a piece of gallantry. Perhaps this is without precedent or parallel. But we cannot

wonder at want of success,—at no amount of disappointment or penury, in a life illustrated by incidents like these. They evidence to us a powerlessness of will,—the foundation, not only of Coleridge's unhappiness, but of the misery of all lives like his,—victims of depraving habits. A writer, whose comparisons never fail to convey adequate impressions, has said, speaking of this extraordinary man—

“It is but a feeble image for comparison that is recalled to us, in the description of some fine, fleet, and powerful animal, desperately and vainly bounding and plunging over the wilderness, under a leopard, fixed with fangs and talons over its crest. The appropriate image would be that of a beautiful spirit, closely and relentlessly pursued, grappled at, poisoned, and paralysed, by a demon from the dark world.”

Thus powerless was poor Coleridge beneath the bewildering enchantments of opium.

And Goldsmith,—poor Goldy,—his was a life without method. Who has not read of his projected voyage to America,—how he converted his horse into cash to pay the expenses of the voyage, and took his berth, paying the captain for his freight and the other etceteras of the journey. But the wind did not answer for three weeks. “My misfortune,” says he, “was,

that when the wind served I happened to be with a party in the country, and my friend, the captain, never inquired after me, but set sail, with as much indifference as if I had been on board." When the Duke of Northumberland sent an invitation to Goldsmith, for the express purpose of asking him in what way he could do him any kindness, delighted with his newly published poem, "The Traveller," (the duke was just about to depart to Ireland, as Lord Lieutenant,) and hearing that Goldsmith was a native of that country, sent for him to make him the offer of his services,—“And, what did you say?” said Sir John Hawkins, who had met Goldsmith at Northumberland House.—“Why,” said he, “I could say nothing; but that I had a brother, a clergyman, there, who stood in need of help: as for myself, I have no great dependence on the promises of great men; I look to the booksellers for support, they are my best friends, and I am not inclined to forsake them for others.” “Thus,” continues Sir John Hawkins, “did this *idiot* in the affairs of the world, trifle with his fortunes, and put back the hand that was held out to assist him.” We can by no means admit the ungracious word *idiot*; it is disgraceful to the man who would use it in such a connection; but, with all the affection we feel for the memory of Goldsmith, we may readily perceive that this

was an opportunity for serving himself, and thus more certainly serving his brother ; at the same time we appreciate the noble independence the anecdote reveals.

And Burns also illustrates this classification of lives without method ; he says himself :

“ My life flowed on in the same course, till my twenty-third year ; *vive l'amour et vive la bagatelle*, were my sole principles of action.” Again, he tells us, “ I learnt to fill my glass, and to mix without fear in a drunken squabble ; yet I went on with a high hand with my geometry, till the sun entered Virgo, a month which is always a carnival in my bosom, when a charming *filette*, who lived next door to the school, overset my trigonometry, and set me off at a tangent from the sphere of my studies. I, however, struggled on with my *sines* and *cosines* for a few days more ; but stepping into the garden, one charming noon, to take the sun's altitude, there I met my angel,—like

‘ Proserpine, gathering flowers,  
Herself the fairest flower.’”

Now these illustrations have been cited from no want of sympathy with the eminent men of whom they are memorials ; but because the anecdotes are indexes to the life ; and, eminent as they all confessedly were, they are the representatives of a

large class of men, whose usefulness was limited, because the impulses of their life were not placed beneath strong harness and control ; they had not one master aim to neutralise their master passion : —the waves of passing excitement bore them along, and they surrendered themselves, without opposition, to those waves ; this is life *without* method ; a life that has not been constrained to the dominion of law ; a life that has not been compelled to walk beneath the light of some great objective principle.

Now, in contradistinction to this, may be placed —*the life with method* : a life that does resolve itself into principles of action, and does acknowledge some great purpose and plan—indeed the life of prudence.

It has been said, that the highest impulses are incompatible with the prudential character.—Biography rectifies this error, and assures us of numerous instances in which they existed in combination. We might cite the highest instances, and it will be obvious, that however the more light and trifling flakes of genius may be thrown off without any effort, and certainly without any concentrated plan or aim, the great vertebræ and columnar works can only be executed by repeated battles and conflicts, and a determined reaching forward to the great task ; and as we see this in

the works of the most distinguished men ; so from their works we find the law governing their lives. There is evidence sufficient to show that it was so in the most lofty instances, but we content ourselves with citations from the inferior names. The life of John Horne Tooke may be selected from hundreds of instances as illustrative of this daring, in the very highest degree ; bold, it might be thought to rashness. It is surprising how that great man held the fervid passions of his intellect in mastery and control ; his vehemence of spirit, his reckless insolence of demeanour, were all in fact the result of premeditation ; were all arranged to produce the results which in fact they did produce. The history of English jurisprudence and legislation does not furnish another instance so remarkable, as that which led eventually to his change of name.

Mr. Tooke, a gentleman of moderate wealth, a political friend, sought the advice of John Horne, in a case which appeared desperate, in consequence of the purchase of an estate, called Purley, from whence the great philological work derived its name. His friend was involved in a vexatious litigation, about manorial rights, with a neighbouring gentleman of great wealth and influence, who had betaken himself to the last expedient, an Act of Parliament. That day was the palmy age

of English corruption ; and the bill had been hurried through two readings ; the third reading would receive the final sanction of the House of Commons ; and on the day previous to that reading, Mr. Tooke stated his case mournfully and despairingly to John Horne. “ If the facts be as you represent them, the House shall not pass that bill ;” this was the reply. He was not a Member of the House, and it sounds little short of insanity, from a man, who was only known to the government of the day, to be hated by it. Yet he, a private scholar, living in quietude and retirement, sprung like a tiger, forward, and arrested the progress of the bill. He immediately addressed a letter, most pointedly offensive, to the Speaker of the House of Commons, and caused it to be inserted in the newspaper, rendered so popular, by the insertion of the letters of Junius, on condition, that when the printer was called up, he should, of course, disclose the author’s name. His object was, that, thus the House should be compelled to give a more formal attention to the bill, as well as to direct the attention of the country, to the mode of transacting business in the House ; and thus he was confident he should frustrate the measure, willing to take the consequences upon himself. The sensation was great upon the day after the appearance of the letter. All the business of the House

was suspended, to enquire into the flagrant outrage upon its dignity ; "a dignity so vulnerable, by a plain charge of misconduct, though it had not been injured, in the least, by the misconduct of itself." The printer was called before the House ; he came, and instantly gave up the name of the criminal, who had taken care, to be already in the House, prepared to confront, probably, with very little trepidation, the whole anger of the august assembly ; and there disavowing all the respect to the Speaker, whom he had libelled. He calmly explained the motives of the proceeding, and poured a luminous explanation over the assembly, in reference to the case of his friend. The obnoxious bill was immediately thrown out, and several resolutions passed, to prevent such precipitate proceedings for the future. Horne escaped with a nominal punishment.

Now, this is one of the most extraordinary illustrations of method and design in human conduct. Here every part of the plan was laid, and the mental eye saw all, and noted the consequences of each movement. But how extraordinary must have been the mental discipline of that character, that could so instantly have arranged all its plans and designs. In this anecdote the whole biography of the man seems to stand revealed to us. Daring, yet without rashness ; resolute, and yet

so unscrupulously flexible, in order that the end might be gained.

John Horne Tooke is by no means our picture of a normal man ; but his life was as truly mapped out to himself as the life of many a more extraordinary man. He knew, if any man ever knew, how to captain and command his ideas ; he marshalled them to his will, and this is the prominent characteristic of the methodic intellect. Some men's ideas lie all before them—they see them at a glance ; the ideas of other men come trailing after them—they see what should have been used when the opportunity for use has gone by. Such men can never be the *avant couriers* of thought ; they might more appropriately be called the baggage-waggon.

Johnson is always thought of as a contrast to Goldsmith. His was a most methodic life. In the prosecution of that most stupendous work, his "Dictionary," he was fully sensible of the difficulties before him, and nobly conscious of his own abilities. When Dr. Adams found him busy upon it one day, he said to him, " This is a great work, sir. How are you to get all the etymologies ? "

" Why, sir," said Johnson, " here is a shelf with Junius and Skinner, and others ; and there is a Welch gentleman, who has published a collection of Welch proverbs, who will help me in the Welch."

"But," said Adams, "how can you do this in three years?"

"Sir, I have no doubt I can do it in three years."

"But," continued Adams, "the French Academy Union, consisting of forty members, took forty years to complete their 'Dictionary.'"

"Sir," replied Johnson, "thus it is—this is the proportion:—Let me see, forty times forty is sixteen hundred. As three to sixteen hundred, so is the proportion of an Englishman to a Frenchman."

And Johnson was not a boaster. A gruff but real man. His life was passed beneath the influence of great and presiding duties. Many of those duties, it may be, were grave prejudices; but the world has seldom had a firmer, more faithful, and more loving heart to bless it than that of old Samuel Johnson. All his writings are little, compared with his life—that was great. Nobody feels much the reality of the "Rambler," or of "Rasselas," still less do we care about "Irene," or the "Poems." But Johnson, carrying the victim of disease and dissipation on his back through Fleet-street—Johnson quitting the society of Garrick and his actresses, and the reason he assigned for it—Johnson by the death-bed side of Catharine Chambers—these are the situations in which we like to see him. So also the graphic little incident mentioned by Boswell.

“As we walked along the Strand, to-night, arm-in-arm, a woman of the town accosted us in the usual enticing manner. ‘No, no, my girl,’ said Johnson; ‘it won’t do.’ He, however, did not treat her with harshness; and we talked of the wretched life of such women.”

Every thing that we see and know of Johnson revolves round a high consistency. There is no inflation in his life; it is quiet and solemn. All that he does, he does with system, and with method. The wretchedness that lived constantly with Goldsmith, never approached the home and heart of Samuel. He possessed no facilities which Goldsmith did not possess. His style had not those popular attractions which have made Goldsmith beloved wherever the English language is spoken. He wrote, probably, with greater difficulty. He came to London, like Goldsmith, without introduction or home, and, like him, wrote for bread, and knew that if the lines were not written, the bread would not come. Yet what makes and marks the difference between these two men? The one, economical without penuriousness, moves everywhere respected and honoured; the other, most lavishly generous, fails to win respect, though everywhere commanding love. The one in death receives the homage and respect which titled dignity is fond of paying to departed

genius; the other is buried in silence, from the disgrace attaching to his memory, from two thousand pounds of debt hanging over his coffin. Now, what was the element of character that produced this amazing difference? Perhaps Goldsmith was a better man than Johnson. He certainly was, in the higher sense, the wiser; but he was a wair upon the waves of circumstances. Johnson, like a broad vessel, adapted the helm to the wave, and thus rode over the billows of life in triumph.

But, in the range of didactic biography, never let Plutarch be forgotten. He can never be read too much, and that must be a barren taste that can ever tire of his writings. The lives of men of whom it behoves the world to know something, have never been so compendiously presented. "Plutarch's Lives" form the photography of biography; in a few pages he not only presents to us all that is known of eminent character, but we feel that nothing can be added to our real knowledge of essential character; every variety of biographic record, every mode of presenting life is new—the founders of states, the men who gave their names to kingdoms, the patriarchs of empires who coerced the people to their rule, even in their graves—and men whose lives shot up in the night of time, like rockets over besieged cities, and then departed and left the gloom intense as before. He

invests all the scenes with clothing appropriate to the time; we do not mistake the costume any more than we mistake the meaning of the character; and a page or a stroke conveys to us also some of the nicer manners of the life of the times. We are introduced to the dignity of Dentatus, who, though he was the greatest man in Rome, and had driven Pyrrhus out of Italy, cultivated his little farm with his own hands, enjoying the conversation of Cato, whom, when the ambassadors of the Samnites came to offer him a large present of gold, they found dressing turnips for his dinner. He absolutely refused their gold. "A man," said he, who can be satisfied with a dinner like that, has no need of gold. It is more glorious to conquer the owners of it than to have it myself." We should know Lysander well, if nothing more had been told us of him than that jest of his, when rebuked for his adopting artful and unworthy expedients—"When the lion's skin falls short, it must be eked with the fox's." The life of Phocion alone contains not merely wit enough to set many a man up for life, but how much, most telling and instructive to us in this time, and in every time, when great buildings are shaking with tremendous applause. The speaker might frequently turn to his friends, like Phocion, and say—"Have I inadvertently let some bad thing slip from me?" Many a young

ardent spirit has found the moving of the early greatness and ambition of Themistocles, "whom the trophies and shields of Miltiades would not suffer to sleep." There is, it may be presumed, no person who will not find, in the pages of the old Grecian lessons fitted to his understanding, broad historic incident, and mental personal detail, graphic sketches of manners and customs, philosophy conveyed by amusing anecdotes, fastening like rivets on the memory, and richly suggesting thoughts lying beyond the mere allusion. Plutarch is now comparatively little read or referred to ; but from the views of his originality, some of the wisest instructors of men have derived much of their wisdom. Old Montaigne employed these lives as a key to unlock his own mind : and, reading Shakspeare and Plutarch side by side, we soon learn how dear the Grecian was to the Englishman. In a word, he pre-eminently illustrates to us the uses of biography.

Another beautiful lesson from the study of purely didactic biography, is the elegance and dignity of self-help, the nobility of independence. Biography often corrects our ideas of state and importance ; we read through whole reams of paper, chronicling the events of courts, the lives of kings, the poor achievements of fashionables, and we are afflicted with ennui while we peruse ; we soon tire of our task ; there is no dignity in all this. We learn the

lessons of manhood in altogether another school than that in which Professor Beau Nash, and Professor Beau Brummell delivered their prelections. We soon learn that elegance is not taught at a dancing-school; that dignity does not consist in, or comport with, stuttering; that noble manners are not always encased in silken hose, and satin doublets. Very truly says Emerson:—

“A man passes for that he is worth. Very idle is all curiosity concerning other people's estimates of us, and idle is all fear of remaining unknown. If a man know that he can do anything—that he can do it better than any one else—he has a pledge of the acknowledgment of that fact by all persons. The world is full of judgment days, and into every assembly that man enters, in every action he attempts, he is gauged and stamped. ‘What hath he done?’ is the divine question which searches men, and transpierces every false reputation. A fop may sit in any chair in the world, nor be distinguished for his hour from Homer and Washington; but there can never be any doubt concerning the respective ability of human beings, when we seek the truth. Pretension may sit still, but cannot act. Pretension never feigned an act of real greatness. Pretension never wrote an *Illiad*, nor drove back Xerxes, nor Christianized the world, nor abolished slavery.”

All real biography is constantly saying to us, "Be thyself! Help thyself!" and there is no necessity so being and doing, that the manners should be marked by a coarse vulgarity. Again, we say elegance—there is the rustic elegance of manhood and genius, shining out on the pages of many noble memoirs, and far transcending the lacquering and tinseling of courts and mansions. Poverty gives tone to manners, calls out the faculty of thought, and trains perceptions to acuteness, otherwise blunted, darkened, or dull.

Narrow circumstances are the most powerful stimulant to mental expansion, and the frowns of fortune the best security for her final smiles. A nobleman, who painted remarkably well for an amateur, showing one of his pictures to Poussin—the latter exclaimed, "Your lordship only requires a little poverty to make you a complete artist."

So, in biography, we like to meet with such anecdotes as the following—

"During the American Revolution, it is said that an officer, not habited in his military costume, was passing by where a small company of soldiers were at work, making some repairs on a small redoubt. The commander of the little squad was giving orders to those who were under him, relative to a stick of timber which they were endeavouring to raise to the top of the works. The timber went

up hard, and on this account the voice of the little great man was the oftener heard, in his regular vociferations of "Heave away! There she goes! Heave ho!"

The officer before spoken of, stopped his horse when he came to the place, and seeing the timber sometimes scarcely move, asked the commander why he did not take hold and render a little aid. The latter appeared to be somewhat astonished, and turning to the officer with the pomp of an emperor, said, "Sir, I am a corporal!"

"You are not, though, are you not?" said the officer. "I was not aware of that;" and taking off his hat and bowing, "I ask your pardon, Mr. Corporal!"

Upon this he dismounted from his elegant steed, flung the bridle over a post, and lifted till the sweat stood in drops upon his forehead.

When the timber was elevated to its proper station, turning to the man clothed in brief authority, "Mr. Corporal Commander," said he, "when you have another such job, and have not men enough, send to your commander-in-chief, and I will come and help you a second time." The corporal was thunder-struck—it was Washington!

Or this of Franklin:—

Soon after his establishment in Philadelphia, Franklin was offered a piece for publication in his

newspaper. Being very busy, he begged the gentleman would leave it for consideration. The next day, the author called and asked his opinion of it. "Why, sir," replied Franklin, "I am sorry to say that I think it highly scurrilous and defamatory. But being at a loss, on account of my poverty, whether to reject it or not, I thought I would put it to this issue,—at night, when my work was done, I bought a two-penny loaf, on which, with a mug of water I supped heartily; and then, wrapping myself in my great coat, slept very soundly on the floor till morning; when another loaf and a mug of water afforded pleasant breakfast. Now, sir, since I can live very comfortably in this manner, why should I prostitute my press to personal hatred, or party passion, for a more luxurious living?"

One cannot read this anecdote of the American sage, without thinking of Socrates' reply to King Archelius, who had pressed him to give up preaching in the dirty streets of Athens, and come and live with him in his splendid courts:—"Meal, please your Majesty, is a half-penny a pock at Athens, and water I can get for nothing."

And if the following is not in very exquisite taste, it yet speaks out the same lesson of rustic repose, in doing the duty, mindless of appearances,—those haunting bug-bears of life.

"Hollo, you man with the pail and frock," said a British officer, as he brought his fiery steed to a stand in front of Governor Chittenden's dwelling, "can you inform me whether his honour the Governor of Vermont resides here?"

"He does," was the response of the man, still wending his way to the pig-sty.

"Is his honour at home?" continued the man of the spurs.

"Most certainly," replied the man of the frock.

"Take my horse by the bit, then," said the officer; "I have business to transact with your *master*."

Without a second bidding, the man did as requested, and the officer alighted and made his way up to the door, and gave the pannel several hearty taps with the butt of his whip—for, be it known, in those days of republican simplicity, knockers and bells, like servants, were of but little use. The good dame of the house answered the summons in person; and having seated the officer, and ascertained his desire to see the governor, departed to inform her husband of the guest's arrival; but on ascertaining that the officer had made a *hitching-post* of her husband, she immediately returned, and informed him that the governor was engaged in the yard, and could not well wait upon his honour and his *horse* at the same

time. The predicament of the officer can be better imagined than described.

It is very beautiful to carry a calm unconsciousness of self into places of importance. The important man is in a most deplorable condition ; he is always hurt, always wounded and vexed, like a man with the itch—that pleasant complaint is said to result from the existence of an insect beneath the skin—and the vain strutting man, corporal, or captain, or mayor, or any other little brief official, has just such an irritating insect in his own vanity, and sense of dignity.

When the great William Penn, and Thomas Story, once took shelter beneath some house in Pennsylvania, from the rain, the owner came forth with great pomp of manners, and said,

“How dare you take shelter here without my leave? Do you know who I am? I am the mayor of this place.”

“Pooh! pooh!” said friend Story, “my friend here, makes such things as thou art. He is the Governor of Pennsylvania.”

## CHAPTER VII.

## DIDACTIC BIOGRAPHY CONTINUED.

BIOGRAPHY furnishes us however, with numerous incongruities ; so many, we are compelled to believe that no man is blessed, however great, with a perfect life, or exempted, whatever his position, from the conséquences of human infirmity.

Many have exhibited foibles and vices in proportion to the magnitude of the talents by which they were raised above other men, lest, perhaps, they might carry themselves too much above common humanity. Pope was an epicure, and would lie in bed at Lord Bolingbroke's for days, unless he was told there were stewed lampreys for dinner, when he instantly rose and came to the table. Thomson, the poet, was notoriously lazy, and would lie in bed till the afternoon usually. It is very doubtful if he ever saw the sun rise in his life ; he

lost several important government places through gross inattention and neglect. Even Sir Isaac Newton gave credit to the idle nonsense of judicial astrology ; he who first calculated the distances of the stars, and revealed the laws of motion by which the Supreme Being organizes and keeps in their orbits unnumbered worlds—he who had revealed the mysteries of the stars themselves. Dryden, Sir Isaac Newton's contemporary, believed in the same absurdity. The great Duke of Marlborough, when visited by Prince Eugene, on the night before a battle—when no doubt the two generals were in consultation upon a measure that might decide the fate of an empire,—was heard to call his servants to account for lighting up four candles in his tent upon the occasion ; and he was once actually seen on horseback, darning his own gloves. His avarice and cupidity were extraordinary. Hobbes, who wrote the “*Leviathan*,” a deist in creed, had a most extraordinary belief in spirits and apparitions. Locke, the philosopher—the matter-of-fact Locke, who wrote, and in fact established, the decision of things by the rule of right reason, laying down the rule itself—delighted in romances, and revelled in works of fiction. What was the great Lord Verulam ? Alas ! too truly, “the wisest, greatest, meanest of mankind.” As for Martin Luther, the reformer,

he was so passionate and unchristian-like, that he struck his friends, Melancthon in particular, and perhaps would have burned him as readily as an inquisitor in those days would have burned a heretic, in the paroxysms of his rage. Cardinal Richelieu, the minister of a great empire, believed in the calculation of nativities. Sir Thomas More burned the heretic, to whom in his writings he gave full liberty of conscience. Alexander the Great was a drunkard, and slew his friends in his cups. Cæsar sullied the glory of his talents by the desire of governing his country despotically, and died the victim of his ambition, though one of the wisest, most accomplished, and humane of conquerors. But we are travelling far back for examples which should be taken from later times. Tasso believed in his good angel, and was often heard to converse with what he fancied was a spirit or demon, which he believed he saw. Raphael, the most gifted artist the world ever produced, died at the age of thirty-seven, his constitution weakened by irregular living. Dr. Samuel Johnson was notoriously superstitious, and always supposed he heard his mother calling to him after her death. Sir Christopher Wren, who built St. Paul's Cathedral, was a believer in dreams. He had a pleurisy once, being in Paris, and dreamed that he was in a place where palm-trees grew,

and that a woman in a romantic dress gave him some dates. The next day he sent for some dates, in the full belief of their revealed virtues, and they cured him. Dr. Halley had the same superstitious belief. Melancthon believed in dreams and apparitions, and used to say, that one came to him in his study, and told him to bid Guyneus, his friend, to go away for some time, as the Inquisition sought his life. His friend went away in consequence, and thus, by accident, really saved his life. Addison was fond of the bottle, and is said to have shortened his life by it. Burns, the poet, was a hard drinker, and, there can be no doubt, wore out his constitution by his conviviality. Goldsmith was a gambler, and the victim of the fraudulent. Prior was the dupe of a common woman, whom he believed to be an angel. Garrick was as vain as any woman, and equally loved flattery. Kneller's vanity was such, that nothing was too gross for him to swallow. Porson, the first of Greek scholars, was a notorious tippler. We might multiply examples of this kind without end; but we need not have quoted so many, to exhibit how well the balance is poised to keep human pride within due limits.

Another of the uses of biography is in the portraits it presents to us of mental and moral pathology and jurisprudence. Lives, studied in a

right spirit, present to us the varieties of mind-disease, the mode of treatment, the causes of the morbid termination, and the cure. And seeing that we are mostly so sickly in our constitution, that dyspepsia is a malady not more frequently afflicting the body than the mind—seeing that every man is burdened by some one especial moral complaint—a complaint, too, not the less certainly fixing its fangs upon him because he never complains, because it eats into his constitution, and destroys his moral vitality, frequently before he is aware—seeing that men will not study mental and moral science, on the whole, by rule and by science; that they take the knowledge of their mind-life and the conditions of its health, as they do the knowledge of the marvels of their frame, by hints and symptoms, by observations and comparisons—every thing that tends to facilitate the man's study of himself, that will place in stronger light comparisons and hints leading to a survey of his own defects or necessities—every thing by which, in short, he may be made to know himself, must be valuable. Everybody, in reading attentively a biography, has, almost involuntarily, frequently paused to notice certain vivid resemblances to his own state of mind—to exult, as it may be, in his likeness to a celebrated intellectual profile; or to deplore that such a man excelled and succeeded in

virtue of the possession of some powers which he has not. This is well! Knowledge of ourselves is good and important; because it is a lamp, lighting to performance. A man must know himself, before he can understand for what work he is fit in the world; before he can judge of his powers, and understand upon what field they may most advantageously, to his own moral advancement, be displayed. But knowledge is not all.—Knowledge should be desired, that it may lead to mental symmetry. Symmetry—to this, every great mind-life that we read, in some degree, magnetises us;—it is well to place our minds beneath the influence of opposite lives, so that several powers may be put into training at the same time.

Suppose we seize upon a few of the hints which may strike the reader, in the course of his psychological speculations in the walks of biography, and the psychology of biography; the reality of it, all the outside conditions, result from the mental state. Several writers have insisted upon youth as the period of development; and this is true. Without doubt, Biography sums up a magnificent list of men who, while yet very young, had engraven their names deeply in the heart of the world.

D'Israeli carries us along, in a well-known passage, through a famous summary; the passage is from "Coningsby:—"

“The greatest captains of ancient and modern times both conquered Italy at five-and-twenty! Youth, extreme youth, overthrew the Persian Empire. Don John of Austria won Lepanto at twenty-five—the greatest battle of modern times; had it not been for the jealousy of Philip, the next year he would have been Emperor of Mauritania. Gaston de Foix was only twenty-two when he stood a victor on the plain of Ravenna. Every one remembers Conde and Rocroy at the same age. Gustavus Adolphus died at thirty-eight. Look at his captains; that wonderful Duke of Weimar, only thirty-six when he died. Banier himself, after all his miracles, died at forty-five. Cortes was little more than thirty when he gazed upon the golden cupolas of Mexico. When Maurice of Saxony died at thirty-two, all Europe acknowledged the loss of the greatest captain and the profoundest statesman of the age. Then there are Nelson, Clive—but these are warriors, and perhaps you may think there are greater things than war. I do not; I worship the Lord of Hosts. But take the most illustrious achievements of civil prudence. Innocent III., the greatest of the popes, was the despot of Christendom at thirty-seven; John de Medici was a cardinal at fifteen, and, Guicchiardini tells us, baffled with his state craft Ferdinand of Arragon himself. He was pope, as Leo X., at

thirty-seven; Luther robbed even him of his richest province at thirty-five. Take Ignatius Loyola and John Wesley; they worked with young brains. Ignatius was only thirteen when he made his pilgrimage, and wrote the "Spiritual Exercises." Pascal wrote a great work at sixteen, the greatest of Frenchmen, and died at thirty-seven! Ah! that fatal thirty-seven! which reminds me of Byron, greater even as a man than a writer. Was it experience that guided the pencil of Raphael when he painted the palaces of Rome? He died, too, at thirty-seven. Richelieu was secretary of state at thirty-one. Well, then there are Bolingbroke and Pitt, both ministers before other men leave off cricket. Grotius was in great practice at seventeen, and attorney-general at twenty-four. And Acquaviva—Acquaviva was general of the Jesuits, ruled every cabinet of Europe, and colonised America, before he was thirty-seven: 'What a career!' exclaimed the stranger, rising from his chair, and walking up and down the room, 'the secret sway of Europe! That was, indeed, a position!' But it is needless to multiply instances. The history of heroes is the history of youth."

But the scroll is not nearly complete: it would not be difficult to make out even a nobler list of instances of the development of extraordinary powers in youth—the attainment of posts of com-

mand and importance—while others were only in their nurseries or school-rooms.

What is the meaning of all this? Simply—intensity of determination!—a whole soul, resolved on one pursuit, will achieve wonders.

“ A man can do anything that he is determined upon, and goes at work rightly to accomplish. The Alps will appear little more than mole-hills, when he has made up his mind to scale them. The heavens will be as plain as a printed sheet, when he has commenced reading the stars. A fortune will be as easily acquired as a few hundred dollars, when wealth is made the business of life. Who can fathom the depth of determination? It is self-omnipotent. Few men know their own strength—their own capabilities. Hundreds might have been as brave as Napoleon—as philosophical as Franklin—as wise as Washington—as ingenious as Fulton—as benevolent as Howard, if they had known their own powers. But fearing their own shadows, and turning aside from the mole-hills in their path, they lingered in obscurity, and died without being either curses or blessings to the world. Than to have been scourges to mankind it was better—but who can estimate the amount that might have been accomplished by millions who have passed off the stage, without leaving a single memento behind? Let it be yours, O man,

to live for some purpose—to achieve something for those who follow after you—to leave the world in better hands than you found it; but determine not to die a cipher or a drone—to expire like the bursting of a soap-bubble, being nothing for people to look at, admire, and take courage from. Than to pass away thus, we should rather have an existence among the heathen, or prefer that our first breath should have been our last.”

It is to didactic biography we are indebted for many of our wonderful advances in scientific benevolence. The examples and the lessons of the high-minded and large-souled benefactors of our race, whose speculations upon the nature of disease, the pathology of crime, the treatment of insanity, prison discipline, and social health, have left behind them a perfect trail of light for their successors to profit by,—and from their lives we learn how the mind, in its energies and determinations, influences inferior minds, moulds them to its purposes, achieves an easy conquest over them, and secures their emancipation from evils to which it seemed as if they were bound for their life. Just such a biography is that of the distinguished philanthropist, Pinel, the French physician, who first introduced into mad-houses, a sane mode of treating insane people.

The following interesting sketch of the first

trial made by Pinel, to govern lunatics by moral force alone, is from an account written by his son :

It was in the latter end of 1792, that Pinel, who had been appointed, some time before, medical superintendent of the Bicetre, (the mad-house of Paris, urgently applied for permission from the authorities, to abolish the use of the irons with which the lunatics were then loaded. Unsuccessful, but resolved to gain his object, he repeated his complaints, with redoubled ardour, before the Commune of Paris, and demanded the reform of this barbarous system.

"Citizen," replied one of the members of the Commune, "to-morrow I will pay you and the Bicetre a visit. But woe to you if you deceive us, and are concealing the enemies of the people amongst your madmen !"

The member of the Commune who spoke thus was Couthon. The next day he arrived at the Bicetre.

Couthon was himself, perhaps, as strange a sight as that which he had come to see. Deprived of the use of both his legs, he was always carried about on men's shoulders ; and thus mounted and deformed, he, with a soft and feminine voice, pronounced sentences of death ; for death was the only logic at that moment. Couthon wished to see and personally question the lunatics, one after

another ; he was conducted to their quarter of the building ; but to all his questions he received but insults and sanguinary addresses, and heard nothing amidst the confused cries and mad howling, but the chilling clank of the chain, reverberating through the disgustingly dirty and damp vaults. Soon fatigued by the monotony of the spectacle, and the futility of his inquiries, Couthon turned round to Pinel, and said—

“ Ah, citizen, are not you yourself mad, to think of unchaining such animals ? ”

“ Citizen,” replied the other, “ I am convinced that these lunatics have become so unmanageable, solely because they are deprived of air and liberty, —and I venture to hope a great deal from a thoroughly different method.”

“ Well, then, do what you like with them ; I give them up to you. But I fear you will fall a victim to your presumption.”

Now master of his actions, Pinel, next day, commenced his enterprise, the real difficulties of which he had never, for a moment, disguised from himself. He contemplated liberating about fifty madmen, without danger to the more peaceable inmates. He decided to unchain but twelve as a first experiment.—The only precaution he judged it necessary to adopt was, to prepare an equal number of waistcoats,—those made of stout linen,

with long sleeves, and fastened at the back, by means of which it is easy to prevent a lunatic from doing serious mischief.

The first whom Pinel addressed was the oldest in this scene of misery. He was considered the most ferocious of all. His keepers even approached him with caution; for in a fit of violence he had struck one of the servants with his chains, and killed him on the spot. He was more harshly treated than the others,—and this severity and complete abandonment only tended still more to exasperate his naturally violent temper.

Pinel entered his cell alone, and addressed him calmly :—

“Captain,” said he, “if I take off your chains, and give you liberty to walk up and down the yard, will you promise me to be reasonable, and to injure no one?”

“I will promise you; but you are making game of me. They are all too much afraid of me, even you yourself?”

“No, indeed, I’m not afraid,” replied Pinel; “for I have six men outside to make you respect me; but believe my word; confide in me, and be docile. I intend to liberate you, if you will put on this linen waistcoat, in place of your heavy chains.”

The captain willingly agreed to all they required

of him, only shrugging his shoulders, and never uttering a word.

In a few minutes, his irons were completely loosened; and the doctor and his assistants retired, leaving the door of his cell open.

Several times he stood up, but sank down again. He had been in a sitting posture for such a length of time, that he had almost lost the use of his limbs. However, at the end of a quarter of an hour, he succeeded in preserving his equilibrium; and from the depth of his dark cell he advanced, tottering, towards the door. His first movement was to look up at the heavens, and to cry out in ecstasy, "How beautiful!" During the whole day, he never ceased running up and down the stairs, always exclaiming, "How beautiful! how delightful!"

In the evening, he returned of his own accord to his cell, slept tranquilly on a good bed, which had been provided for him in the meantime; and during the two following years which he spent at the Bicetre, he never again had a violent fit; he even made himself useful, by exercising a certain authority over lunatics, governing them after his fashion, and establishing himself as a kind of superintendent.

His neighbour in captivity was not less worthy of pity. He was an old French officer, who had

been in chains for the past thirty years, having been afflicted with one of those terrible religious monomanias of which we even now-a-days see such frequent examples. Of weak understanding, and lively imagination, he deemed himself destined by God for the *baptism of blood*—that is to say, to kill his fellow-creatures, in order to save them from hell, and to send them straight to heaven, there to enjoy the felicity of the blessed ! This horrible idea was the cause of his committing a frightful crime. He commenced his homicidal mission, by plunging a dagger into the heart of his own child. He was declared insane, confined for life in the Bicetre, and had been afflicted for years with this revolting madness. Calmness, at length, returned, but without reason ; he sat on a stone, silent and immoveable, resembling an emaciated spectre of remorse. His limbs were loaded with the same irons as when first he was confined, but which he had no longer strength to lift. They were left on him as much from habit, as from the remembrance of his crime. His case was hopeless. Dr. Pinel had him carried to a bed in the infirmary ; his legs, however, were so stiff and contracted, that all attempts to bend them failed. In this state he lived a few months longer, and then died, without being aware of his release.

The third presented a strong contrast. He was

a man in the prime of life, with sparkling eyes ; his bearing haughty, and gestures dramatic. In his youth, he had been a literary character. He was gentle, witty, and had a brilliant imagination. He composed romances, full of love, expressed in most impassioned language. He wrote unceasingly ; and, in order to devote himself with greater ardour to his favourite compositions, he ended by locking himself up in his room, often passing the day without food, and the night without sleep. To complete all, an unfortunate passion added to his excitement ; he fell in love with the daughter of one of his neighbours. She, however, soon grew tired of the young author, was inconstant to him, and did not even allow him the consolation of a doubt. During a whole year, the anguish of the poor dreamer was the more bitter from concealment. At length, one fine day, he saw the absurdity of his despair, and passing from one extreme to the other, gave himself up to every kind of excess. His reason fled ; and being taken to the Bicetre in a raging fit, he remained confined for twelve years, in the dark cell where Pinel found him, flinging about his chains with violence. —This madman was more turbulent than dangerous ; and being incapable of understanding the good intended to him, it was necessary to employ force to loose his irons. The moment he felt him-

self at liberty, he commenced running round and round the courtyard, until, his breath failing, he fell down quite exhausted. This excitement continued for some weeks, but unaccompanied by violence, as formerly. The kindness shown to him by the doctor, and the especial interest he took in this invalid, soon restored him to reason. Unfortunately, he was permitted to leave the asylum, and return to the world, then in such a state of agitation; he joined the political factions of the day, with all the vehemence of his passions, and was beheaded on the 8th Thermidor.

Pinel entered the fourth cell. It was that of Chevinge, whose liberation was one of the most memorable events of that day.

Chevinge had been a soldier of the French guard, and had only one fault—drunkenness. But once the wine mounted in his head, he grew quarrelsome, violent, and most dangerous, from his prodigious strength. Frequent excesses caused his dismissal from his corps, and he soon squandered his scanty resources. At length shame and misery plunged him in despair, and his mind became affected. He imagined that he had become a general, and fought all who did not acknowledge his rank. It was at the termination of a mad scene of this kind, that he was brought to the Bicetre in a state of fury. He had been chained

for ten years, and with stronger fetters than his companions, for he had often succeeded in breaking his chains, by the mere force of his hands. Once, in particular, when by this means he had obtained a few moments of liberty, he defied all the keepers together to force him to return to his cell, and only did so, after compelling them to pass under his up-lifted leg. This inconceivable act of prowess he performed on the eight men who were trying to master him. From henceforth his strength became a proverb at the Bicetre. By repeatedly visiting him, Pinel discovered that good dispositions lay hidden beneath violence of character, constantly kept excited by cruel treatment. On one occasion, he promised to ameliorate his condition,—and this promise alone had greatly tranquillised him.

Pinel now ventured to announce to him that he should no longer be forced to wear his chains.—“And to prove that I have confidence in you,” added he, “and that I consider you to be a man capable of doing good, you shall assist me in releasing those unfortunate individuals who do not possess their reason, like you. If you conduct yourself properly, as I have reason to think you will, I shall then take you into my service, and you shall not leave me.”

Never in the mind of man was there so sudden or complete a change: the keepers themselves were

forced to respect Chevinge for his conduct. No sooner was he unchained, than he became docile, attentive,—watching every movement of Pinel, so as to execute his orders dexterously and promptly, —addressing words of kindness and reason to those lunatics with whom he had been on a level but a few hours previously, but in whose presence he now felt the full dignity of liberty. This man, who had been unhumanised by his chains, during the best years of his life, and who doubtless would have dragged on this agonising existence for a considerable length of time, became at once a model of good conduct and gratitude. Frequently, in those perilous times, he saved Pinel's life; and one day, amongst others, rescued him from a band of ruffians, who were dragging him off *a la lanterne*, an elector of 1789. During a threatened famine, he every morning left the Bicetre, and never returned without provisions, which at that moment were unpurchaseable, even for gold. The remainder of his life was but one continued act of devotion to his liberator.

Next room to Chevinge, three unfortunate soldiers had been in chains for years, without any one knowing the cause of this rigour. They were generally quiet and inoffensive, speaking only to each other, and that in a language unintelligible to the rest of the prisoners. They had, however,

been granted the only privilege which they seemed capable of appreciating—that of being always together in the same cell. When they became aware of a change in their usual mode of treatment, they suspected it to proceed from unfriendly motives, and violently opposed the loosening of their irons.—When liberated, they would not leave their prison. Either from grief, or want of understanding, these unhappy creatures were quite insensible to the liberty now offered to them.

After them came a singular personage, one of those men whose malady is more difficult of cure, from its being “a fixed idea,” occasioned by excessive pride. He was an old clergyman, who thought himself Christ. His exterior corresponded to the vanity of his belief: his gait was measured and solemn; his smile sweet, yet severe, forbade the least familiarity; everything, even to the arrangement of his hair, which hung down in long curls on each side of his pale, resigned and expressive countenance, gave him a singular resemblance to the beautiful head of our Saviour. If they tried to perplex him, and said, “If thou art him whom thou pretendest: in short, if thou art God, break thy chains and liberate thyself!” he immediately, with pride and dignity, replied, “In vain shalt thou tempt thy Lord!” The sublimity of human arrogance in derangement!

The life of this man was a complete romance, in which religious enthusiasm played the first part. He had made pilgrimages on foot to Cologne and Rome, and had then embarked for America, where, among the savages, he risked his life in the hope of converting them to the true faith. But all these travels, all those voyages, had the melancholy effect of turning his ruling idea into a monomania. On his return to France, he publicly announced himself as Him whose gospel he had been preaching far and wide. Seized and brought before the Archbishop of Paris, he was shut up in the Bicetre as a lunatic, his hands and feet were loaded with heavy irons, and for twelve years, he bore with singular patience, this long martyrdom, and the incessant sarcasms to which he was exposed.

Argument with such minds is useless ; they neither can nor will understand it. Pinel, therefore, never attempted to reason with him ; he unchained him in silence, and loudly commanded that every one for the future should imitate his reserve, and never address a single word to this poor lunatic. This line of conduct, which was rigorously observed, produced an effect on this self-conceited man, far more powerful than the irons and the dungeon. He felt himself humbled by this isolation, this total abandonment, in the full enjoyment

of his liberty. At length, after much hesitation, he began to mix with the other invalids. From that time forward he visibly improved, and in less than a year, was sufficiently recovered, to acknowledge the folly of his former ideas, and to leave the Bicetre. \* \* \* \* \*

Fifty lunatics were in this manner released from their chains in the space of a few days. Amongst them, were individuals from every rank of life, and from every country. Hence the great amelioration in the treatment of the insane patients, which, until then, had been looked on as impracticable, or at least, fraught with the utmost danger.

This is an extraordinary instance of mental power and authority asserted over beings in whom the mind-life was very feeble, and it guides us to some knowledge of the method by which all men obtain their superiority over their fellow-man. Yet even "love itself may abuse power. Howard was, as a philanthropist, a blessing to the world; but, as a father, however affectionate, he seems to have been unwise; a mistaken sense of duty caused him to pierce his own heart. He thought it his duty to insist on obedience merely to the authority of parental power, instead of enforcing it by the attractiveness of fatherly feeling and consistency. Natural faith and affection are not blind, but well able to distinguish their proper objects.

He taught his child, while still an infant, not to cry, and never in all its childhood permitted it to have what it demanded with tears ! God forbid that our Father in heaven should thus treat us ! He expects us to be in earnest. But, said Howard, the government of a being that cannot reason about the fitness of things should be only coercive and in fear. He overlooked the discernment that is keener than reason ; he forgot that the heart has to be educated as well as the head, and that it is ruled aright only as long as love is visible in power. A child that must always govern its feelings from fear of others, will soon be a hypocrite and a tyrant. When the fetters upon it are removed, the soul will rush into selfish extravagance, and, perhaps, perish ; like a bird from a cage, unfit to use its wings, and aiming only at pleasure, while incapable of providing for its own wants. Thus Howard's son was in infancy coerced, without fondness ; in youth, *commanded* to be moral ; in manhood, became debauched, and then mad.\* A heavy responsibility rests upon those who possess mind of extraordinary vigour, therefore, that it is not only employed, but well employed—that the authority established over their fellows be founded on an appeal to their reason and

\* Dr. Moore—"Man and his Motives."

their highest affections; for the captivity of mind is mighty, and its power is frequently almost imperial, when wielded for no pure or noble purposes.

Yes! the imperial sway of mind! When Sophocles was charged before the Areopagus of Athens, with madness, he did not formally reply, but read to them the *Œdipus Coloneus*, which he had first composed, and was instantly acquitted. And when the Marchioness de Ancres was accused before her judges, of witchcraft over her queen, before her condemnation to be burnt, she indignantly replied she had used no witchcraft but that which the strong mind always asserts over the weak one. Large admission—for the witchery of the mind is the most dangerous and potent on this side the grave.

The lesson of all biography is the grandeur of energy; this gives to men their power over their fellows. Many of the physical evils, the want of vigour, the inaction of system, the languor and hysterical affections which are so prevalent among the delicate young women of the present day, may be traced to a want of well-trained mental power, and well-exercised self-control, and to an absence of fixed habits of employment. Real cultivation of the intellect, earnest exercise of the moral power, the enlargement of the mind, by the

acquisition of knowledge, and the strengthening of its capabilities for effort, for the firmness of the endurance of inevitable evils, and for energy in combating such as may be overcome, are the ends which education has to attain; weakness, if met by indulgence, will not only remain weakness, but become infirmity. The power of the mind over the body is immense. Let that power be called forth; let it be trained and exercised; and vigour, both of body and mind, will be the result. There is a homely, unpolished saying, that "It is better to wear out than rust out;" but it tells a plain truth,—rust consumes faster than use. Better—a million times better, to work hard, even to the shortening of existence, than to eat and sleep away the precious gift of life, giving no other cognizance of its possession. By work, or industry, of whatever kind it may be, we give a practical knowledge of the value of life, of its high intentions, of its manifold duties. Earnest, active industry, is a living hymn of praise, a never-failing source of happiness; it is obedience, for it is God's great law of moral existence.

Another thing worthy of notice in biography is more *material* than the *sympathetic* force exercised by the mind over the body, and in return by the body over the mind. It is of vast importance to health, that the mind in all its parts, should be

well balanced ; no one attribute acting at the expense of others. A disordered or a distempered mind is totally incompatible with health and long life. It soon destroys the body of its possessor. Tranquillity and repose of mind are indispensable to health and long life. It is an interesting fact, that all the vices contribute to disturb the mind, while all the virtues contribute to its repose and tranquillity. The effect of vice is to destroy health and shorten life. On the other hand, virtue inclines to lengthen life. Allow me to urge you to cultivate symmetry of mind. Repel from your mind all corroding cares—all unnecessary anxiety—and everything in the shape of secret vices. Secret vices are like the destructive vermin that establishes itself in the heart of the choicest and most promising fruits, and eats out all their virtue and substance. Never allow revenge, envy, hatred, or malice to take possession of your mind. These conditions of mind deepen all the lines of the face, sharpen all the features, and give to the possessor the appearance of premature old age. But, on the other hand, internal purity and the practice of benevolence, the exercise of generosity, of kindness to all, *thinking* no evil, cultivating the fullest cheerfulness, will soothe and soften the coarsest brow. Above *all*, the whole mind requires an anchor that shall stay it in all storms, vicissitudes

and troubles of life. This anchor is obtained in pure and undefiled religion : a constant reliance, in all trials, upon God our Saviour. Practise the precepts of health. For your mind, learn and practise all the teachings of our blessed Saviour, and your person will be full of strength and beauty, your days multiplied, and your life will be long, prosperous and happy.

## CHAPTER VIII.

## BIOGRAPHY AN INDUCTIVE SCIENCE.

ANOTHER of the uses of biography is that *its pages are the inductions of mental and moral science*; they are to the student of humanity what the battery is to the electrician, and the retort is to the chemist. It is from reading the lives of other men that we become best acquainted with our own. Erasmus, when his guardian, at the age of seventeen, desired him to enter a monastery, replied, "No, I will not. I neither know what the world is, what a monastery is, nor what I am myself. I shall continue a few years more in the school, that I may become better acquainted with myself." In like manner, in the study of biography, men become acquainted with the motions and structure of their own minds. A well written life, that presents to us the entire picture of a mind, unclasps to us the sealed volume

of our own inner history. Sometimes the works of a man form his best mental autobiography, as in the case of Montaigne ; more frequently we have to wait until the tomb has closed over him, before we are permitted to take an inventory of the interior of his mind—that solemn room where none besides himself and the Deity can enter. One pre-eminent value of the written life is, that it gives to us glimpses of that solemn chamber, the laboratory of the life ; for through that chamber moved all the fantastic shapes and tragic forms of the imagination ; what projects and plans ; what pieces of mental architecture ; what struggles ; what hopes ; what defeats ; the hell where conscience pronounced her verdict, and uttered her fulminations ; the camera obscura of the soul ;—yet there fell the gleams of the cloud-realm ; the phantasms of the understanding danced and played there ; rainbows, meteors, lightnings, and auroras commingling or raying out their likeness on the mystic apartment. Now biography does little if it does not admit you there—if you are not permitted to see the psychologic features of the portrait. Very much of biography is only the holding up the dial-plate of the watch ; and inferior writers possess only the power to do this, unless the subject of the memoir has done much himself. But every man has a main-spring to his character, and we wish to

see this, and how it was set in motion. We wish to see how all the intricate machinery of wheels was held in harmony and consistency—how all the passions, like tributary wheels, obeyed the ruling master-motion of the soul. Without this insight, how is it possible to know a life? Yet, in this way, much of our biography is written.

In painting we can easily discover the character; the warrior is known by his sash, or his helmet; the apostle by his rags, or his halo; the madonna by the circle; and the angel by his wings. Lauzi, in his "History of Painting," observes that "a large landscape of Poussin or Salvator Rosa is seen in half the time it takes to examine even a small one by Claude, since the small one embraces so many objects, and admits so ample a perspective, that a spectator almost anticipates the fatigues of a long journey." Thus we shall ever find it with the study of human character. Some men seem to be known at a glance; some only after a long survey. Warburton says one great cause why it is so difficult to judge of persons in general, "arises from that obscurity which is thrown over the character, through the contest and the strife between nature and costume, reason and appetite, truth and opinion." And Horace Walpole expresses surprise that in writing men's lives, biographers so frequently become enamoured of their

subjects. "One would think," he says, "that the nicer disquisition one makes into the life of any one, the less reason we should find to love and admire him." But perhaps this is seldom the case; and this is the testimony of one accustomed only to the darker aspects of human nature. Much of our antipathy to every character would cease, if we were permitted accurately to survey the foundation parts of its personal life and history."

One of the most interesting and curious of modern psychological portraits is the life of John Foster, the essayist. Everything that he did of a literary nature, living, was as much tinged with his own individuality, as Montaigne's writings. All his essays are mental memories. He accustomed his eye to be ever looking within his own soul, or analysing the mental life of those persons with whom he was brought into association. Unlike Montaigne, he is not therefore racy, cheerful, and garrulous. He is rather like a mental dissector; and, he sometimes lays bare character, with the mercilessness of a moral Majendie. But few lives are so rich in instruction of every kind; for it is the picture of a self-made mind; and the reader sees how the course of education went on; how the objects of nature, and the peculiarities of human character, were all noted and placed; where, when the time came, they might be made avail-

able for mental use; it is so much more interesting to notice the activity of mind, than of mere person, that this hermit becomes most interesting to us. He lived in what many would consider a very monotonous world; but to him every place was interesting, because suggestive; and you are permitted to see this, in reading his journal, published long after his death. You see how much the man lived—how he diffused himself over every object, and absorbed back all into his proper mental being. Again, let the reader ponder the following random selections from that journal (never intended for publication, but rather a mental Index Rerum).

218. "I am not *observing*, I am only seeing, for the beam of my eye is hot, charged with thought."

267. "I have seen a man, a *religious* man, press his foot down repeatedly on a small ant hill, while a great number of the poor animals have been busy on it. I never did such a thing, never. Oh, Providence! How many poor insects of thine are exposed to be trodden to death in each path: are not *all* beings within Thy care."

292. "This soul shall either govern this body, or shall quit it."

324. "I compare life to a little wilderness, surrounded by a high dead wall. Within this

space we muse and walk, in quest of the new and the happy, forgetting the insuperable limit, till, with surprise, we find ourselves stopped by *the dead wall*;—we turn away, and muse, and walk on again; till, on another side, we find ourselves close against the dead wall. Whichever way we turn,—still the same.”

371. “An old stump of an oak, with a few young shoots on its almost bare top. *Analogy*. Youthful follies growing on old age.”

372. “A little pool, amid a barren heath, shining resplendently in the morning sunshine. *Analogy*: Talents, accompanied with moral barrenness (*i. e.*)—indolence, or depravity.”

416. “(Of an extraordinary depraved child). I never saw so much *essence* of devil put in so small a space.”

506. “—— a memory is nothing but a row of hooks, to hang up grudges on.”

507. “One of the strongest characteristics of *genius*, is the power of lighting its own fire.”

789. “Spent part of an hour in company with a handsome young woman, and a friendly little chat. The young woman was ignorant and unsocial. I felt as if I could more easily make society of the cat. I was, however, mortified and surprised at this feeling when I noticed it. It does, however, seem to be in our nature,—at least of

mine,—that, unless our intercourse with a human being can be of a certain order, we had rather play awhile with an inferior animal. Similar to this is the expedient one has often had recourse to, of talking a large quantity of mixed sense and nonsense to a little child; to even an insensible infant, perhaps, from finding the toil, or the impossibility of holding rational intercourse with the parents."

705. "Delightful reverie on the idea of an angel living, walking, conversing with one for a month. Month of ecstatic sentiment! What profound and incurable regrets for his going away."

602. "(Said of a lady who infamously spoilt her son—a most perverse child). She will have her reward; she cultivates a *nightshade*, and is destined to eat its poisoned berries."

Thus we obtain glimpses of a mind. The sentences quoted, are like shafts of light running through the pages. Such sentences are the finest pieces of life-painting. They are the features of the person. All the letters of Foster are interesting, because, with occasional flatulency of expression, they are the records of volitions, feelings, reminiscences, and thoughts.

One interesting letter may be cited, addressed to a lady the writer had not met since she was fifteen years of age; when the letter was written

she was nearly sixty. It, too, is an illustration, how constantly he was haunted by a painful sense of his individuality.

“MY DEAR OLD FRIEND,

“For it is a long time to look back upon since the friendship was *young*. I was exceedingly gratified at receiving your letter, dilatory as I have been in acknowledging it, and as I am in every thing I ought to do with despatch. It was a strange and pleasant surprise to see at the end of it the name of Fanny Purser. It gratified me that the said Fanny Purser should, through so wide an interval, have remembered me with so kind a feeling, as should have induced her to write to me. This feeling was excited by the mere sight of the name, and it became quite animated, as I read the friendly sentiments expressed in the letter. I could not have flattered myself that I had been so well, so long, and so kindly remembered. Dear Fanny, it truly is a very cordial, as well as unexpected, gratification. What a distant retrospect, and how many remembrances and associations! Your excellent parents—Henry Strahan—Mrs Butler—our talks and amusements—the place, and change of habitation—your brother a boy—yourself a girl, hardly fifteen, perhaps, the last time I saw you. Of you I can only have one

image in my mind: and I am thinking and wondering what would be the difference if the present reality were to appear before me. It really does seem strange to think of Fanny as a grandmother. It would be interesting to hear you tell the difference between your youthful anticipations of life and your views of it, as resulting from what you have experienced and witnessed in the progress through so long an interval. What is the difference in this respect between yourself and your daughter? Have you occasion sometimes to smile at the promises with which she hears the future flattering her? Have you to say to her, 'My dear child, you will find it out in due time?' But perhaps she is not of a sanguine temperament; and I am very willing to believe that you are not of a gloomy one, notwithstanding the share that has been appointed you of mournful experience. I should greatly like to see you. I should fix and settle in my mind and imagination who you are; for I find myself addressing an *equivocal somebody* between the good, pleasing, little girl, Fanny Purser, and a certain sedate, matronly personage, a grandmother of the age of fifty-seven. I hope many years are to be added to that account, moderately happy, and finally concluding in something incomparably happier than anything on earth. I will repeat how very greatly I am gratified by your

kind letter ; and shall be so again, if, at any time, you shall feel disposed to favour me. I wish you had mentioned the remembered things that you say ' would have made me smile ;' it would have been very curious to see whether my own very miserable memory had retained them. It does retain many particulars of those remote times very vividly. My dear Fanny, as I like to call you, I commend you and yours to our heavenly Father ; and repeat to you how truly

" I am,

" Your cordial and much gratified friend,

" J. FOSTER."

A very different biography, but yet of the same order, developing mental individuality, is the recently published life of Keats. The greater number of his readers were not prepared to expect the portrait of a mind disciplining and training itself for what seemed to be its mission, making the world a school for spiritual gymnastics, and, in the most earnest and methodical manner, evolving and measuring his powers. Few expected to find so much joviality and humour in the private life of the author of "Endymion" or "Isabella ;" yet it might have been expected ; for it seems a law of our nature, that the most cheerful humour exists with the highest beauty. In this biography, as in

others of the same school, we have to notice that the interest depends greatly upon the personal confessions—confessions which unlock to us the real state of the mind. We have had in life-writing too much of this spirit of the confessional, a species of egotistic parade, and the mistake is in supposing that the revelations of all minds may be equally important and equally instructive. The experiments of the boy of eight years old are most important to himself; the sage of sixty has passed their boundary; then, again, confessions should be whispered to the individual soul, a circumstance very rarely the case; a confession, got up with the full intention of going to press with it, has a very suspicious moral squint. Keats's letters have a rackety heydayishness about them, setting them above suspicion; they are frequently wild and turbulent, but they look like the natural reactions of a spirit strung up to unusual intensity. Let us cite an instance or two.

“This Devonshire is like Lydia Languish,—very entertaining when it smiles, but cursedly subject to sympathetic moisture. You have the sensation of walking under one great lamp-lighter, and you can't go on the other side of the ladder, to keep your frock clean. Buy a girdle, put a pebble in your mouth, loosen your braces, for I am going among scenery whence I

intend to tip you the Demoiselle Radcliffe. I'll cavern you, and grotto you, and waterfall you, and wood you, and water you, and immense rock you, and tremendous sound you, and solitude you. I'll make a lodgement on your glacia, by a row o pines, and storm your covered way with bramble bushes; I'll have at you with hip and haw small shot, and cannonade you with shingles; I'll be witty upon salt fish, and impede your cavalry with clotted cream. But, ah, coward! to talk at this rate to a sick man—or, I hope, to one that was sick, for I hope by this you stand on your right foot. If you are not—that's all. I intend to cut all sick people, if they do not make up their minds to cut sickness—a fellow to whom I've a complete aversion; and, strange to say, is harboured and countenanced in several houses I visit. He is sitting now quite impudent between me and Tom; he insults me at poor Jim Rice's, and you have seated him, before now, between us at the theatre, when I thought he looked with a longing eye at poor Kean. I shall say, once for all, to my friends generally and severally,—cut the fellow, or I cut you."

But the following passage is still more characteristic; it is so illustrative of mental life, and brings home to our minds a portrait of the wild,

and passionate, and sensitive boy, that it must be cited.

“ Notwithstanding your happiness, and your recommendations, I hope I shall never marry : though the most beautiful creature were waiting for me at the end of a journey or a walk ; though the carpet were of silk, and the curtains of the morning clouds ; the chairs and sofas stuffed with cygnet’s down ; the food, manna ; the wine, beyond claret ; the window opening on Windermere,—I should not feel, or rather my happiness would not be, so fine ; my solitude is sublime : for instead of what I have described, there is a sublimity to welcome me home : —the roaring of the wind is my wife ; and the stars through my window-panes are my children ; the mighty abstract of beauty, in all things, I have, stifles the more divided and minute domestic happiness. An amiable wife and sweet children I contemplate as part of that beauty ; but I must have a thousand of those beautiful particles to fill up my heart. I feel more and more, every day, as my imagination strengthens, that I do not live in this world alone, but in a thousand worlds. No sooner am I alone, than shapes of Epic greatness are stationed around me, and serve my spirit the office which is equivalent to a king’s body-guard ; then, Tragedy, with sceptred pall, comes sweeping by. According to my state of mind, I am with Achilles,

shouting in the trenches ; or with Theocritus, in the vales of Sicily ; or throw my whole being into Troilus, and repeating those lines—‘ I wander, like a lost soul upon the Stygian bank, waiting for waftage,’—I melt into the air, with a voluptuousness so delicate, that I am content to be alone. The only thing that can affect me personally, for more than one short passing day, is any doubt about my powers for poetry. I seldom have any ; and I look with hope to the nighing time when I shall have none. Think of my pleasure in solitude, in comparison with my commerce with the world ;—there I am a child,—there, they do not know me, not even my most intimate acquaintance. Some think me middling ; others, silly ; others, foolish : —every one thinks he sees my weak side. Against my will, I am content to be thought all this, because I have in my own breast so great resource. This is one great reason why they like me so, —because they can all show to advantage, and eclipse, from a certain tact, one that is reckoned to be a good poet. I hope I am not here playing tricks ‘ to make the angels weep.’ I think not, for I have not the least contempt for my species, and, though it may sound paradoxical, my greatest elevations of soul leave me every time more humbled.”

It is probable that these citations have been too long, but they have been cited with a purpose ;

we are interested in the mental lives of great men ; whatever their age, their outer life concerns us ; not that we care but little for it, except as it illustrates the deeper—the inner life ; and we are thankful therefore, if one will write that life for us plainly, and communicate it. Hence, Montaigne never tires us with his egotism ; his essays perhaps furnish the most perfect mental autobiography ever penned. This book we are compelled to say is honest ; here without any fear of reader or reviewer, the whole furniture of the soul is seen, without being displayed ; and in reference to authors, if we desire to know any thing of their outer life, it is that we may see how far it reflected itself upon the inner chamber. Nor authors alone, innumerable other men are to us altogether reserved, we cannot see them ; we feel that in spite of all that farmer-like bluntness of Cromwell, that it is his breastplate, and we cannot pierce it ; spite of all this courtly politeness of Shaftesbury, it is but his veil, and we cannot lift it. And Richelieu, so quiet, so sleek, so cruel, is it, we ask, only for power and for glory ? In that silence is his depth, and we cannot fathom ; it were foolish to ask such men to wear their heart upon their sleeve ; but we must wonder what they saw, or thought they saw : such minds are interesting to us, for they influenced the conditions of our own mental being :

but to write and read the history of these minds,—this is a work we must do for ourselves. Such men do not usually possess the power of introspection: a glance within them, perhaps, had been more terrible than battles, revolutions, and executions: we gather, therefore, what such men were, by the mind-life of the still souls whose days were passed in the grot and the hermitage; and every such mind-life is a true system of mental science, and is valuable in the degree in which the narrator has honesty, faithfully to relate particulars; sagacity, to look into the very deeps of his consciousness; and mental being and boldness to venture out into new seas and over new territories of speculation; and caution to discriminate between the varied mental territories. We have had many mental histories wanting in all these qualifications. With the superaddition, however, of the intolerable vanity of dullness, perhaps such biographies were not without their value, if carefully noted; for every little buzzing human insect is worthy to fill some place in the cabinet of life,—but let it be understood that it is but an insect.

## CHAPTER IX.

## MORAL OF MISTAKEN LIVES.

AGAIN in the classification of Lives, we shall not fail to give an important place to those *persons who have staked their lives upon an idea*. Such men are important, and worth attentive study, whether they have won or lost in the great game they were playing. This is the best definition, perhaps, that can more fully realise to us that self-centred energy, that calm and vivid glance at things, in their manifold relations to life, which we notice in the enthusiastic character; and how much of the most important work in the world, whether good or evil, has resulted from these internal impulses? from men who viewed every thing in relation to their own idea, and remorselessly swept away every obstacle, to the triumph of their idea. There have been many varieties of these men: some of

them possessed the power of absorbing and making tributary to them every person, and every thought; others, on the contrary, reject every person, every leader, unless squaring with their darling idea. Some hold an idea in their breast, in a kind of reserve; they never reveal it; it burns within them, it inspires them, their passionate determination increases in intensity, in the very degree in which it is unrevealed; it consumes them with its fervid heat. Great revolutions are the platforms upon which to see these varied characters; and they furnish magnificent studies to those who desire to read the history of the human mind. No man is so truly unselfish, as he who lives to publish and perpetuate his thought. The French and the English Revolutions gave birth to many such men, but there are two especially worthy of note in France.

Robespierre has seldom been understood, perhaps has never been regarded from the true point of vision;—it is not easy to pronounce immediately upon a life like this. Warriors attain the end of their ambition on the field of indiscriminate slaughter. This man sought to attain the triumph of his political faith, by shearing away all opposition advanced to it in the senate. The annals of biography do not furnish another life, apparently so remarkable in its contradictions. In

those tall, but most simple rooms in the house in the Rue St. Honore, for years, this man led a frugal and most virtuous life. You see nothing of the bluster of the charlatan,—nothing of the vanity of the demagogue,—nothing of the anxiety of the ambitious. In a round of humble occupations, his life passes on; frugality and abstemiousness always characterise him; frugality alike at the table, in his pleasures, in his friendship; the prudence of a beautiful and simple life presided over all that he did; nor did this ever vary, when he rose to be the tyrant of opinion; while from his lips passed verdicts, appalling all hearts in France, and throughout the civilised world: while his pen was rapidly—rapidly signing dooms, consigning now the greatest, and now the least of the children of humanity, to the scaffold,—king, queen, orator, statesman, citizen, matron, and maid; while the form of the man rises before us, reeking with the blood of L'Abbate. We are yet perfectly puzzled in our attempt to pronounce a decision upon him, so difficult it is to pronounce him a cruel and sanguinary monster, as we see him in the very plenitude of his power, sitting in the little family parlour, talking with his betrothed wife, whom he does not dare yet to marry, from the unsettled state of the nation. The sister of that betrothed wife lives still, and holds the memory of Robes-

pierre in homage, utterly unable to comprehend the curses heaped upon the memory of one, to her apparently, so estimable, virtuous, and kind.

Is there any solution to this mystery of character? And shall we not find it in the unyielding faithfulness to his idea? To judge a man justly, to accurately understand his motives, or to attempt to do, does not suppose, therefore, an extenuation of his errors and his crimes. This man could not absorb into his theory all men and their thoughts; he, therefore, as we said, remorselessly sheared them away, boasting of his efforts, for the liberty of the people; he subjected them, with himself, to the despotic cruelty of a tyrant idea.

We have sometimes thought that the character of Robespierre might be in some degree better comprehended by reading it side by side with that of a much better, if not a much greater man—we mean Sir Harry Vane. It has very frequently appeared to us that that great man would willingly have sacrificed all, in order to have established his own idea: he was desirous of conferring upon the people blessings they could not comprehend, and enfranchising them with a liberty they did not desire. Of all the men who lived and acted in the period of the English Revolution, not one had such luminous and enlarged convictions—not one was more faithful to them; yet the

predominancy of those convictions would have plunged England in anarchy, and have made the senate the scene of transactions resembling the contests of the Girondists and Montagnards. We sometimes know a character more perfectly, by comparing it with its like, after the manner of old Plutarch ; and the association of two names seemingly so opposite as those of the "sea-green Robespierre,"\* and the murdered Vane, is from no want of veneration to that high-minded patriot, but because he, too, illustrates the potency of the life of ideas in the mind ; he, too, has been cruelly misrepresented and misunderstood ; and although the cruelty and the cowardice attributed to the Frenchman were strangers to the English heart, we see in his character that which might have given a similar remorselessness to the tyrant idea.

Remorseless ! Why, what is so remorseless as the tyranny of an idea burning in the breast—an idea untold—an idea, to the realization of which everything must yield ; to which life, health, wealth, worldly esteem, must all bow : the difficulty is to select, for biography and history are full of such strange actors and actions. But what do our readers think of the "Angel of Assassination,"† Charlotte Corday ? From her home in Normandy, she beheld in the man, or rather insane demon,

\* Thomas Carlyle.

† Lamartine.

Marat, the cause of her country's wretchedness and desolation; in him all the cruelty and the crime were impersonated. She studied the histories of Judith and Jael, until it seemed to her that heaven called her to strike a blow for her country. If anything that can be uttered that shall sound like the murmur of a plea for Robespierre, if any extenuation can be offered for him, then the feelings with which we regard Charlotte must rise to absolute adoration. At that time law was dead in France. From one end of the kingdom to the other was heard the low, stifled sounds of fear or despair. Marat was the apostle of wholesale murder. Everything about the man was vile, disgusting. Yet in him was emblazoned and shadowed forth a social system. Robespierre affected elegance—Marat affected dirt. He harangued the people in the short jacket of the citizen, his hair greasy, and matted in locks, his hands thickly begrimed with dirt, his shirt thrown open upon his breast; wild in his dress—his eyes. "They call us drinkers of blood," said he. "Well, let us merit the name, by drinking the blood of our enemies; let us slay them upon their benches in the theatre of their crimes." Such words from such a figure might well lead to the conviction that this was the incarnation of anarchy and murder. And he was the impersonated genius

of the Revolution. Robespierre — Danton — all yielded to him the tribune in the National Assembly. And whenever he rose to speak, still the cry was "blood, blood." In Charlotte Corday's mind was borne the idea of travelling hundreds of miles to murder this man. "I hoped to restore peace to my country," said she. "Do you then think that you have assassinated all the Marats?" "Since he is dead, perhaps the others may tremble." Her mind had been inspired by the awful heroes of Plutarch, by the tenderness of Rousseau, and the humanity of Raynal; and she determined to offer herself a sacrifice for her country. She travelled then from Caen to Paris. She wrought herself up to a chivalric missionary zeal. Her tenderness increased upon her progress, but her whole demeanour was solemn. The following is a passage in the Apocrypha, in an old Bible—"Judith went forth from the city, adorned with a marvellous beauty, which the Lord had bestowed on her, to deliver Israel." Charlotte Corday reached Paris, purchased there a knife, procured entrance to Marat, and struck him with it to the heart. Of course she expiated her offence on the scaffold. The insane mob would gladly have torn her to pieces for the slaughter of their favourite.

When the state of France at that time is remembered—when the character of Marat is remem-

bered—Charlotte Corday must be regarded as the Joan of Arc of the Revolution. She was inspired by an idea. She imagined herself called, like a Hebrew maiden or matron, to avenge, not her king merely, but her country. The sentiments she held were shared with her by the intelligence of Normandy. The majority of the citizens there desired not the death of the king; and they held the deeds of the Mountain, the faction opposed to the Girondists, but the leading and most democratic party, in abhorrence. This young lady was the grand-daughter of no less a person than Corneille, the great master of French tragedy. It is saying little to assert that her whole deportment was worthy of the most magnificent conceptions of the tragedian. Such are not the actions likely to result from the study of Christianity. But her conduct was a combination of Roman fortitude and Grecian grace. She was sustained throughout by her ideas; no one person appears to have shared her confidence; all went on within. We cannot charge with madness a person acting for such an end. With such method, there can be no doubt that the maiden committed a grave mistake—she met brutality by brutality. But the higher, nobler gospel had been but little preached or known. Tried by Pagan standards, by the virtue of the land of the Cæsars and the Catos or the Leonidas

she transcends in heroic status and dignity, and soars above them all.

Poor girl! she staked a whole life—she staked her all, upon an idea; it was but a throw for the stake so precious—and she lost; yet this is the characteristic of all true greatness; this is the soul of all action—faith in an idea.

“What I admire,” said Turgot, in “Christopher Columbus,” “is, not that he discovered the New World, but that he went to look for it on the faith of an idea.”

The great mind has faith in its convictions, and follows the light of its convictions; but then it also knows what to reject, as well as what to accept: the great spirit is a discerning spirit. Charlotte Corday fell into the error of strong individualities,—the supposition that one could do the work of all: her arm fell for judgment upon the murderous social anarchist and bandit; but that was all: she forgot that the nation who could tolerate in its councils such a fiend, was worthy of such a councillor. But the idea haunted her: youth, beauty, love, learning, life, fame—that idea claimed them all, and she sacrificed them all. The idea possessed her mind—it enchanted her life—to liberate her country from the fangs of such a beast; to be torn to pieces now, but to be honoured as a liberator in distant centuries. And so young!—twenty years of age.

Great revolutions produce many sublime spectacles, and the French Revolution produced many ; but it did not produce one more sublime than this youthful beauty upon the tumbril, her arms bound behind her, the waves of her hair flying in the wind,—receiving, in her own mind, her obsequies as a triumph.

## CHAPTER X.

### THE ILLUSTRATIONS OF BIOGRAPHY.

~~Some~~ may we forget amongst the other uses, the *Comminations of Biography*. Who shall say how much heroism has been imparted by the study of ~~some~~ nobly-enduring character, the portrait of ~~some~~ noble nature struggling in almost overmastering agony? There is a passage in "The Cartons," which has always seemed to us finely illustrative of the influence of such a life over suffering.

"After breakfast, the next morning, I took my hat to go out, when my father, looking at me, and seeing by my countenance, that I had not slept, said, gently—

" 'My dear Pissistratus, you have not tried my medicine yet.'

" 'What medicine, sir?'

" 'Robert Hall.'

“ ‘No, indeed, not yet,’ said I, smiling.

“ ‘Do so, my son, before you go out ; depend on it you will enjoy your walk more.’

“ I confess that it was with some reluctance I obeyed. I went back to my own room, and sat resolutely down to my task. Are there any of you, my readers, who have not read ‘The Life of Robert Hall?’ If so, in the words of the great Captain Cuttle, ‘when found, make a note of it.’ Whatever thou art, orthodox or heterodox, send for the Life of Robert Hall. It is the life of a man that it does good to manhood itself to contemplate. I had finished the biography, which is not long, and I was musing over it, when I heard the captain’s cork leg upon the stairs. I opened the door for him, and he entered, book in hand, as I also, book in hand, stood ready to receive him.

“ ‘Well, sir,’ said Roland, seating himself ; ‘has the prescription done you any good?’

“ ‘Yes, uncle, great.’

“ ‘And me, too. By Jupiter, Sisty, that same Hall was a fine fellow ! I wonder if the medicine has gone through the same channels in both ? Tell me first, how it affected you.’

“ ‘All that is very well said ;’ quoth the captain, ‘but it did not strike me. What I have seen in

this book, is courage. Here is a poor creature, rolling on the carpet with agony ; from childhood to death, tormented with a mysterious malady,—a malady that is described as an internal ‘apparatus of torture,’—and who does, by his heroism, more than *bear* it? He puts it out of its power to affect him ; and though (here is the passage) ‘his appointment, by day and by night, was incessant pain ; yet, high enjoyment was, notwithstanding, the law of his existence.’ Robert Hall reads me a lesson,—me, an old soldier, who thought myself above taking lessons in courage, at least. And as I came to that passage, when in the sharp paroxysms before death, he says, ‘I have not complained, have I, sir? and I won’t complain!’ When I came to that passage, I started up and cried, Roland de Caxton, thou hast been a coward! and if thou hadst had thy desserts, thou hadst been cashiered, broken, and drummed out of the regiment, long ago.”

It is scarcely possible to give a better illustration of a truly good life, upon the mind. The spectacle of patient endurance is always affecting, and inspiring. It helps little souls upwards, and onwards. The unwitnessed heroism of Schiller, of whom, it is asserted, on medical evidence, that during the last fifteen years of life, not a moment could have been free from pain ; yet, so far from

uttering complaint, during this period, he masters his agony, and writes his "Wallenstein," and "William Tell," his æsthetic letters, and histories; enters upon his deepest speculations, and gives utterance to his sublimest words:—

"I have often been acquainted," says the Baron Humboldt, "with persons, both men and women, in whom this condition (of constant bodily suffering) was habitual, and who had not even a single probable hope of ever getting free from it, unless by death. To this class, especially, Schiller belonged. He suffered much, suffered constantly, and knew, too, that (as was actually the case) these perpetual pains were gradually drawing him nearer to death. Yet of him it might truly be said, that he kept his sickness imprisoned within the limits of his body; for at whatever hour you might visit him, in whatever state you might find him, his mind was always cheerful and tranquil, ready for friendly intercourse, and for interesting, and even profound conversation. He would even say, at times, that a man can work better in certain states of bodily ailment,—not those, of course, of acute suffering; and I have found him, while actually in this uncomfortable condition, composing poems and prose essays, in which no one, surely, could discover a trace of this circumstance of their birth."

Jean Paul passes quietly along the ways of poverty, never repining. "What is it," says he, "that a man should whine under it? It is but like the pain of piercing the ears of a maiden, to hang precious jewels in the wound." Biography presents to us, thus, a new book of martyrs,—not the volume of bigotry, but humanity—shows to us how all life is, in some way, a martyrdom; and the whole world a martyrdom.

In some biographic records, we are entertained with the sighs and mournings of the sufferers,—Rousseau faints before the mental struggle,—Cowper, shrinking from action, embraces the very source of his disease,—Byron raves and swears, and curses all the realities of life. There are innumerable such lives—there is nothing sublime about them; fretful, feverish existences, passed in hysteric sobbings and affections, they could not face the fell pursuer; they did not learn that to front pain with defiance, is almost to annihilate it; we do not learn the meaning of life from experiences like these; all biography is bad in its influences which preaches to man the wisdom of retreating in the battle of life; the battle is only to be won by fighting it out. Mental or bodily pain, loss, bereavement, disappointment, diseased nervous sensibility,—the power of each to make us unhappy, may be curbed and controlled. When we were a

very little fellow indeed, a scene took place unlike anything beheld before by our inexperienced eyes. A young lady went off in wild hysterics; a number of good folks about her said—"Poor thing!" and pitied and condoled with her very much, and rubbed her hands and her forehead; but our old nurse took altogether another course, and said—"Shake her, shake her well;" and the young lady was well shaken, and the remedy thus proposed seemed wonderful in its instantaneous effects. Many have received the unbounded pity and commiseration of the world, to whom a similar specific would have been most beneficial. Action is the only cure for false sentiment and diseased sensibility. To flatter the vanity is to provoke the inflammation; we shall notice everywhere, in the course of our reading, that the most healthy life is the most active life. The want of mental occupation is the cause of much, of most of the lunacy in the world; the mind cannot vary its powers, and therefore it perpetually turns upon one point, stretches one chord, to an unnatural degree, and the whole system is untuned. This is the misery of our "sick men of genius," as they have been called; the life they led was not sufficiently objective; they did not behold in the distance an object to which they should stretch forward; the will, the resolution, of the soul was uneducated; and

when it became necessary that they should engage in battle with the evil spirit of their life, they found that, unconsciously to themselves, it had obtained a hold—a mastery upon and over them; and the worst of the evil perhaps was, that they could not fly from it; it was within them, it slept with them, rose with them, walked with them, eat, visited, travelled with them; imperiously compelled them to do its bidding, and they, too late, fell and fainted in the arms and power of their enemy.

Numerous are the instances which might be cited to illustrate this; thus, the indolence and self-indulgence of Thomson, the author of “The Seasons;” the laziness of this man is most remarkable, he did, indeed, live in a Castle of Indolence. Every body knows the anecdote of Quin, regarding Thomson’s magnificent description of sun-rise. Quin, with Savage, the poet, declared his belief that Thomson never saw the sun rise in his life; and related, that going one day, at noon, to see him at Richmond, he found him in bed, and asking him why he did not get up earlier, he replied, “He had nae motive.” Thus Hartley Coleridge’s vagrant, fitful, and aimless life, among the lakes of Westmoreland, a victim to habits that intrepidity might have conquered; thus Addison, promenading his long gallery during the writing of

his "Spectator," a bottle of wine at each end, without which those graceful sentences would not flow. Few lives of this class are more instructive than that of Savage; and, although he scarcely merits the place which Dr. Johnson has given to him in his "Lives of the Poets," not one of those lives is better calculated to demonstrate the misery of a man whose will was powerless to save, but mighty to destroy. Savage was a perfect portrait of that morbid character of mind, prompt to create its own miseries, and equally prompt to blame the whole world for originating them, and not sharing them. To all such lives, and livers, one is disposed to say, "Why did not Hercules crush the snake."

Few thoughts, again, are more affecting than that trite one of *the evanescence of even great names*. The dust that we tread beneath our feet in churchyards, is common dust, but every name mentioned in an encyclopædia, or the subject of a biography—has been a noticeable name; but a collection of the lives of eminent persons, is itself only a literary catacomb. The great French work, the "*Biographie Universelle*," in fifty-two volumes; or "*Chalmers' Biographical Dictionary*," in thirty-two volumes. The oblivion of the churchyard cannot be more complete, than that of most of the names upon these pages; a column, an obelisk, an urn, here and there may be seen, and the compiler, like

some "Old Mortality," moves about among the meaner tombs, to mow the nettles from the grave, and retrace the letters on the stone. But even the graves of the noted are so numerous, and the re-gilded epitaphs occur to the eye so frequently, that at last we are compelled to relinquish all hope of a cursory glance. By slow degrees we learn—sorely against our will—that "one event happeneth alike to all;" that posthumous fame is the merest illusion; that frequently an accident does more to hang notoriety about the name, than the most distinguished pretensions. "Alas! the vanity of human fame," remarks Dr. Southey. Again, (Ecclesiastes,) "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity!"

"How few," says Bishop Jeremy Taylor, "have heard of the name of Veneatapadius Ragium! He imagined that there was no man in the world who knew him not: how many men can tell me that he was King of Narsinga? When I mention Arba, who but the practised textualist can call to mind that he was 'a great man among the Anakim?' that he was the father of Anak, and that from him Kerjath Arba took its name? A great man among the giants of the earth, the founder of a city, the father of Anak! and now there remaineth nothing more of him or his race, than the bare mention of him in one of the verses in one of the chapters of the Book of Joshua: except for that only record,

it would not now be known that Arba had ever lived, or that Hebron was originally called after its name. *Vanitas vanitatem! omnia vanitas.*

An old woman, in a village in the west of England, was told one day, that the King of Prussia was dead; such a report having arrived when the great Frederick was in the noon-day of his glory. Old Mary lifted up her great slow eyes at the news, and fixing them, in the fulness of vacancy, upon her informant, replied,—“Is a? is a? The Lord ha’ mercy! Well, well! The King of Prussia—and, who’s he?” The *who’s he*, of this old woman, might serve as a text for a notable sermon upon ambition. “Who’s he?” may now be asked of men greater than Frederick; or Wellington;—greater, as discoverers, than Sir Isaac or Sir Humphrey. Who built the Pyramids? Who ate the first oyster? But the perception of the evanescence of the great names need not wait until forced upon the mind by associations like these. No; a few years only have to pass away, and a dark mythological gloom comes down like the certain march of night, over names and performances, exciting the most lively admiration and interest.

All our readers are acquainted with Dean Swift’s humorous dedication to Prince Posterity:—

“I had prepared a copious list of titles to dedicate to your highness, as an undisputed argument

of the prolificness of human genius in my own time: the originals were posted upon all the gates and corners of the streets; but returning in a very few hours, to take a review, they were all torn down, and fresh ones put in their places. I inquired after them, among readers and booksellers, but in vain; the memorial of them was lost among men—their place was no more to be found.”

Innumerable have been the efforts to bribe oblivion to spare the ashes from entire forgetfulness: and, doubtless, millions, who figured in the great procession of the world, imagined themselves safe from the doom of serfdom; and the more common clay of humanity, the knight foremost in the list, the scholar most eminent in critical dispute,—some by the erection of the almshouse or hospital, some by the endowment of the college, some by the erection of the church or the decoration of the altar,—so many struggles have been made to escape from the utter forgetfulness of the grave; the written life is another of these efforts—in vain!—impossible! or nearly so.

The ancient schoolmen, for instance, what do we know of them?—of Thomas Aquinas, of William Occam, of Duns Scotus?—If Salmatius had not written against Milton, who by this time had not forgotten his name? Yet was his learning prodigious; and, during a temporary illness, Queen

Christina of Sweden was his nurse, she prepared his candles, and mended his fire. Peiresk, who was "regarded as holding the helm of learning;" Du Bartas, the most successful and popular European poet of his age; and Cowley, and Donne, how seldom now do we hear their names mentioned? Well and truly does rare old Sir Thomas Brown say, "Oblivion blindly scattereth her poppy, and deals with the memory of men, without distinction to merit of perpetuity. Who can but pity the founder of the pyramids? Herostratus lives that burnt the temple of Diana,—he is almost lost that built it; time hath spared the epitaph of Adrian's horse,—confounded that of himself. Who knows whether the best of men be known? or, whether there be not more remarkable persons forgot than any that stand remembered in the known account of time? Oblivion is not to be hired; the greater part must be content to be as though they had not been; to be found in the register of God, not in the record of man. There is nothing strictly immortal but immortality! But man is a noble animal—splendid in ashes, and pompous in the grave; solemnizing nativities and deaths, with equal lustre; nor omitting the ceremonies of bravery in the infamy of his nature."

## CHAPTER XI.

## CONCLUSION AND SUMMARY.

WE had intended that the chapter just concluded should have been our last ; but even while looking through the proof-sheets, a few other things have occurred to us by way of epilogue. There is a reflection forcing itself upon us, that, in spite of all the desolation that has fallen over our planet, in spite of the sensuality of our race,—and even commingled with the very sensuality of our race, how much of spirituality there is ; for is not all this Biography, this life-writing,—is it not all mind-writing, is it not all the developement of a higher than the animal nature ? although in truth we have heard of the Biography of birds, and beasts, of rooks and hares ! and very interesting we have sometimes found such biographies to be ; yet they are principally useful to us from their mere tili-

tarian character ; we do not read the presence of the vast spiritual power, we do not find the wonderful action of a soul. All human Biography presents itself to us as the record of a daring being animated by the sense of conscious responsibilities, and by illimitable and determined ambitions. It is surely impossible to turn over the pages of Biography, and to believe that the being whose life this is, commenced and terminated his career, as mechanised, hardened, animated clay. It is impossible to give the body of the man much credit for all that was done. The body we feel to be merely the channel through which something loftier than itself acted upon the world. The History of the World is the History of the Spirit—Spirit is all in all ; it is the overruling power directing the lines and battalions on the field, and superintending the campaign and the siege ; it is the genius of all State policy and cunning ; we feel that no possible combination of mere matter could ever produce a Mazarine, a Richelieu, a Wolsey, or a Becket ; that Talleyrands and Mirabeaus are but themselves the seen and felt agents of some wonderfully etherial power, to which we give in the body “a local habitation and a name.” We find that all the forces man can exercise, his powers and sleight of hand, his skull and form of brain, his erect position, his foot and his thumb,—all

these wonderful distinguishments are the utterances of a hidden power ; they are indexes, so to speak ; they are not causes, but results ; man has them in virtue of something higher ; he has a thumb and hand because he can use it ; he has a larger brain and more convolved lobes and organizations, because it is intended first to be the residence of more exalted and forcible powers than those which find their residence in the lower orders of animals.

Mind—the history of Mind !—the chronicle of the wonders of the human mind—this is what we may denominate all Biographic Records. If we did not demand that all which meets us should be so sensualised, we might find, very frequently, innumerable biographies where no human word had been spoken. Men write their lives down in their performances, to those who can read them. The Painting is the record of one life, and the Stone of another. Looking at the painting of Salvator Rosa, I must have some idea of the mind of the man ; or of Claude, or of Wouvermans, or of Wilkie. Looking at the stone, of Roubillac, or Thorwaldsen, of Flaxman, or of Chantry. These men breathed their minds into these things ; and we can read the mind while we gaze ; they are written conceptions ; and if not the secret of all the value we attach to men's lives, is it not because

we rejoice to find mind alive in the world working, and in attempting, that we love any Biography whatever?

We will revert to a view we expressed in the earlier chapters of this little volume. Why do we take so perennial an interest in Great Men? It is really because they live to reveal to us now the state of the human mind, and of human affections, and human societies in other and past conditions of our world's history. We see one figure dimly shadowed forth to us; one form rises aloft, beyond and above the men of its age. Look at the distant battle-field,—the hosts are lost; we see them swaying, struggling to and fro, beaten down indiscriminate,—in one wild medly they pass along together; but see yonder nodding plumes, how brightly the sun shines on yonder helmet; and now they, the poor wrestlers, lift him up, and place him on their shields, and hail him as great; we see him now through them; he is brought nearer to us; but yet, but for those thousands who pass altogether out of our sight, he had been altogether unknown; he is applauded as great, because he impersonates their greatness; they gather round him, they bear him aloft, they hold him up to our view, because he embodies themselves.

This you will perceive to be the case with all

great men of the times — even the teachers of men have become great to us, because the time at last dawned when their worth was understood and appreciated. Think of CAMILLUS, the great Roman, and the achievement which makes him, to us, most venerable and memorable.

While the city of Rome was agitated by many disputes, a war arose between the Romans and the Falerians, which again called Camillus into active service. He had laid siege to the city, and was preparing his lines of circumvallation, when a Falerian schoolmaster offered to betray into his hands the children of the Falerian nobility, who had been intrusted to his care. Camillus ordered the traitor to be seized, bound, and whipped back to the city by his own scholars. The Falerians were so struck with his magnanimous refusal to take advantage of treason, that they sent an embassy to Rome, soliciting peace, which they easily obtained.

But the disappointment of the soldiers, who had expected to share the plunder of Falerii, added greatly to the unpopularity of Camillus, and his enemies ventured to accuse him of peculation before the assembly of the people. The rage of parties ran so high, that Camillus resolved not to wait the event of a trial, but went into voluntary exile. He could not forbear uttering an imprecation

against the ingratitude of his countrymen, as he passed through the gates; he then proceeded to the residence he had chosen, and learned that he had been condemned to an immense fine, in consequence of his absence.

And while you behold him thus in adversity and exile, contemplate him approaching Rome, when the hoof of the invading Gaul was upon her; see him enter the Capitol, while the very gold was being weighed down to the barbarian hosts, by which Rome was to be redeemed; and as he spurned the hordes of the invaders, behold the true illustration of a great man, seizing the great opportunity, and borne on high to fame, because interpreting the critical event in the right moment of Time. Or an ALARIC. What! and who is he, but a magnified barbarian? Vainly had he lived, had he been alone; he was terrible because he represented innumerable hordes of men like himself. The cruelty of Rome created the rapacity of Alaric and his Goths; it was the massacre of the thousands of the Goths by the Romans, as by a common signal in one day, while all their fortunes were plundered.

Thirty thousand warriors were thus made the deadly enemies of the Roman name, and urged by every motive to labour for its destruction. They had not long to wait for a leader. Alaric soon

recrossed the Alps, and they at once ranged themselves under his standards. Honorius shut himself up in Ravenna; but Alaric would not waste time on the siege; he pushed forward without encountering any opposition, and soon pitched his camp under the walls of Rome.

More than six centuries had elapsed since a hostile army had been seen from the ramparts of the "Eternal City," as it was fondly designated in the age of its glory; but during that interval it had lost every thing from which the real security of the state is derived. The population of Rome was now a mere rabble, composed of various tribes and nations, with scarce a single family that could trace its genealogy to the age of the Republic. Vice and profligacy of the worst description pervaded every rank of society; the very name of patriotism was forgotten. Alaric was allowed to blockade the city without opposition. The Romans had not courage to attempt a sally: they hoped to receive aid from Ravenna; but Honorius was too much occupied in providing for his own security to attempt the deliverance of his subjects. Famine at length arose in the city; all resources were cut off, and its horrors increased with frightful rapidity; plague, the usual attendant of famine, next appeared, and the citizens perished by thousands. At length deputies were sent to the Gothic

camp, to treat about the terms of ransom. They were received by Alaric with courtesy, and directed to state their terms. With pompous parade, which, under the circumstances, was perfectly ludicrous, they demanded a fair and honourable capitulation, in consequence of the skill, the valour, and the number of the Roman citizens. Alaric replied, "The thicker the hay the easier it is mowed:" a rustic metaphor which his attendants hailed with shouts of applause. The abashed deputies requested that he should then fix his own terms. He demanded "all the gold and silver in Rome, all the precious moveables, and all the slaves who could prove their claims to the title of barbarians." "What, then, will you leave us?" asked the deputies. "Your lives," was the brief and stern reply. Less severe terms were subsequently granted, but large sums were sacrificed, and the respite, thus obtained, was as brief as it was inglorious.

But not to notice the history of the warriors, but the dependency of the men upon the outer elements of society for his success, this is our object now. The course of Alaric and all his conquests develope this. It is revealed by his progress in life, and his extraordinary burial in death.

He passed without opposition through the south of Italy, and was about to embark for Sicily,

when he suddenly sickened and died. His soldiers buried him in a very extraordinary manner ; they made their captives change the course of a river, and interred him with his richest trophies in the vacant bed. They then directed the waters once more to their accustomed bed, and by a ruthless massacre of the prisoners engaged in the task, concealed for ever the grave of the mighty Alaric.

It would be interesting too, to linger over the exploits of the humanised barbarian ALATA, and to behold " a rabble of kings," in the words of his historian, " waiting on him, as satellites." We might read the same lesson from innumerable biographies—and we do not intend to preach the entire captivity of man to circumstances, when we point it out. But let it be noted,—the general alone is not great,—there is greatness concealed as well as exhibited—there is the greatness of the unknown and obscure, as well as the well known and celebrated. Over the achievements of most men, we are compelled to drop the pall, or time drops it for us ; but the men who pass from beyond our vision, were they who gave to the great man his celebrity and his renown. What then do we make of this fact? Is not this the lesson, that in proportion to the diffusion of worthy thoughts through the multitudes, will they demand truly

great and worthy leaders over a people baptized with peace? It will be impossible to elevate the military despot to chieftainship and monarchy over a people, whose tastes are sublimed by virtue and ennobled by goodness and piety; it will be impossible to elevate the vicious and libidinous to authority and empire. If the great men of a nation represent the tastes, character, and tendencies of a people, then by all means it seems desirable not to pray for one great man, but to set in operation those causes which may produce the greatest number of good men. The many good men will elevate the pre-eminently good man, and make him their great man. And thus we shall change the tone of the world's homage,—thus we shall not only by-and-bye raise up a dynasty renowned for its goodness, but the sickly admiration wherewith men have been accustomed to rest upon the spectacle of moral deformity, because associated with intellectual eminence, will cease. The homage will be rendered, but the objects of the homage will be men of a different proportion to those of the old day. They will stand upon a different pedestal,—they will hold their place by a different tenure,—their suffrages will be won from the holy and the good; and their eminence will be from their blessing, and not from their cursing man.

And for this reason it is that we turn with rap-

ture in the course of our reading to CHOSROES I. OR NUSHIRVAN, the great and just Emperor of Persia. Nushirvan is highly extolled by the Oriental writers for his love of justice ; and we shall select a few anecdotes both to illustrate his character, and give our readers an example of the habits of thought among Eastern authors. The king used to give the following curious account of the manner in which his mind became first impressed with a sense of equity :—" I, one day, when a youth, saw a man throw a stone at a dog, and break the animal's leg ; a moment afterwards a horse passed, and with a kick broke the man's leg : and this animal had only galloped a short distance when its foot sunk into a hole, and its leg was broken. I gazed with wonder and awe, and have since feared to commit injustice." The ambassadors from Constantinople, admiring the prospects from the windows of the royal palace, remarked an uneven piece of ground, and asked the reason why it was not levelled. " It is the property of an old woman," said one of the Persian nobles, " who has objections to sell it, though often requested by our sovereign, and he would rather have his prospects spoiled, than be guilty of violence." " That uneven spot," replied the Romans, " consecrated as it is by justice, appears to us

more beautiful than any other part of the landscape."

Nushirvan, while hunting, became desirous of eating some of the venison in the field; his attendants went to a neighbouring village, and forcibly seized salt for the royal use. When the meat was served, the king, having learned how the salt was procured, instantly ordered payment to be made. Then, addressing his attendants, he said, "This is in itself a trifling matter, but in reference to me it is one of great importance. A king should be invariably just, because he is an example to his subjects; should he be criminal in trifles, they will become altogether dissolute. If I cannot make my subjects just in the smallest things, I will at least show them that it is possible to be so."

The following inscription is said to have been engraved on the diadem of Nushirvan—

"Why should we boast of life or fame,  
Since heirs to both, with pressing claim,  
Fast on our footsteps tread?  
I, like my fathers, wear a crown,  
And I like them must lay it down,  
And mingle with the dead."

We hope to be pardoned that we insert here his advice to his son, Hormuz, whom he designed

for his successor before his death. Having made peace with Rome, he sent for his son, and addressed him in the following words :—

“ I, Nushirvan, the possessor of the kingdoms of Persia and India, address these last words to my son, Hormuz, that they may be a lamp to him in the days of darkness, a guide through the deserts of life, a beacon when he navigates the tempestuous seas of this world. When these eyes, which even can scarcely bear the solar light, are closed, let him be seated on my throne, and let his lustre be equal to the splendour of the illuminating orb : but let him remember, in the midst of his greatness, that kings rule not for themselves but for their people, and that they are, with respect to them, what the heavens are to the earth. Can the earth be fruitful if the heavens pour not upon it the fertilising rain and dew ? Let all thy subjects, my son, share in thy benefactions,—those who are nearest thee first, and the others, successively, even to the greatest distance. It might be a mark of too much pride were I to propose myself to thee as an example ; but I will remind thee of that which has been an example to me. Behold the sun ; it visits every part of the globe ; it is sometimes visible, and sometimes hidden from our sight, because every region partakes of its splendour and is cherished by its beams. Enter not any province, but with a

prospect of benefiting its inhabitants ; neither quit it, unless with a view of doing good elsewhere. The evil-doers must be punished ; to them the sun of majesty is eclipsed : the good merit encouragement, and should experience its orient glories. As that brilliant luminary unweariedly fulfils the purposes for which it was created, do thou always act as a king, in order that thou mayest be revered as a king. My son, often offer thy homage to the Supreme Being, and implore his aid ; but bow not before the footstool of importance with an impure mind. Do the dogs enter thy temple ? Should evil lusts be admitted into the temple of thy soul ? If thou shalt observe this rule diligently, thy prayers shall be heard : the devices of thine enemies shall be confounded ; thy friends shall be ever faithful ; thou shalt give delight to thy subjects, and receive it from them in turn. Do justice, humble the insolent, relieve the distressed, comfort the broken-hearted, love thy children, protect learning ; follow the advice of thine aged counsellors ; suffer not the young rashly to interfere with the affairs of the state ; let the good of thy subjects be ever thine object and thine aim. Farewell ! I leave thee a great kingdom, which thou mayest preserve by obedience to my precepts, but which thou shalt certainly lose if thou lendest thine ear to opposite counsels."

These were the last words of Nushirvan, the most beloved prince of his age, whose reputation survives to this hour, in the works of all the Eastern historians, in the treatises of their moralists, and, above all, in the writings of their poets.

How pleasant it is to allow the mind to move around the memory of men like Chosroes ! The biographies of kings do not reveal to us many such names, and his whole life appears to be, as far as a king can be consistent, consistent with the spirit of his advice given to his son. Is it not, then, one of the uses of Biography, that it reveals to us that excellence and goodness are the property, exclusively, of no particular class of men—they are the inheritance of all who strive after them. We often speak as if certain posts and stations excluded from the attainment of eminence in goodness, as if some men were fenced round with barricades so high and towering that the beautiful, and the true, and the truly human, could not surmount. The contraction of our own thought would lead us to behold almost the very possibilities of goodness only in our own limited circle. Now, the biographies of men who developed the light of goodness in very unlikely situations, produce grateful and most salutary impressions upon the soul. We find that the spirit of God, (for all goodness is only the light of God), is within the human soul ; we find that the spirit

of God is far more widely diffused over our race than we at first supposed ; we find, in short, that no spot is so secluded or so inaccessible that the holy beauty of divine truth and gentleness may not pierce through and irradiate.

Biography—the chronicle of goodness—the history of the lovely, the beautiful—the assurance of the certainty of something better than we are. Since men like ourselves, born of human parents, and filled with human passions, have been able to attain to that height, the lives of the eminently holy, and brave, and truly Christian and heroic men, are like a pathway descried above us in our way up the difficult hill ; and these lives are like voices, saying to us, “This is the way, walk ye in it.” We feel inclined to make a long extract here, from the life of an eminently lovely man, Sir Stamford Raffles. Let us note the following pages from his life by his widow.

“The consciousness of being beloved is a delightful, happy feeling, and Sir Stamford Raffles acknowledged, with thankfulness at this time, that every wish of his heart was gratified. Uninterrupted health had prevailed in his family ; his children were his pride and delight, and they had already imbibed from him the taste for natural history which he so delighted to cultivate. This will not be wondered at when it is added that two young tigers and a

bear were for some time in the children's apartments, under the charge of their attendant, without being confined in cages; and it was a curious scene to see the children, the bear, the tigers, a blue mountain bird, and a favourite cat, all playing together, the parrot's beak being the only object of dread to all the party.

"Perhaps, few people, in a public station, led so simple a life. He rose early, and delighted in driving into the villages, inspecting the plantations, and encouraging the industry of the people: he always had his children with him as he went from one pursuit to another, superintending the draftsmen, of whom he had always five or six engaged on subjects of natural history, or visiting the extraordinary collection of animals, which were always domesticating in the house. He seldom dined alone, considering the settlement as a family, of which he was the head, and the evening was spent in reading, music, and conversation: he never had any game of amusement in his house.

"Amidst these numerous sources of enjoyment, however, he never forgot that the scene was too bright to continue unclouded; and often gently warned his wife, not to expect to retain all the blessings God in his bounty had heaped upon them at this time, but to feel, that such happiness once enjoyed, ought to shed a bright ray over the future,

however dark and trying it might become. After three years of uninterrupted health and happiness, a sad reverse took place ; the blessings most prized were withdrawn ; the child most dear to the father's heart, whose brightness and beauty were his pride and happiness, expired after a few hours illness ; and from this time, until his return to England, sickness and death prevailed in his family ; but God's Holy Spirit enabled him to receive these afflictions with meekness, and to feel that they were trials of faith, not judgments of anger.

“ Of this child, Sir Stamford Raffles frequently speaks in his letters, in such terms as the following : — ‘ Had this dear boy been such as we usually meet with in this world, time would, ere this, have reconciled us to the loss—but such a child ! Had you but seen him, and known him, you must have doted ; his beauty and intelligence were so far above those of other children of the same age, that he shone among them as a sun, enlivening and enlightening every thing around him.’

“ As an example of the character and feeling of the natives, Lady Raffles relates, that when she was almost overwhelmed with grief, for the loss of their favourite child,—unable to bear the sight of her other children—unable to bear even the light of the day,—humbled upon her couch with a feeling of misery,—she was addressed by a poor, ignorant,

native woman, of the lowest class, (who had been employed about the nursery,) in terms of reproach not to be forgotten, 'I am come, because you have been shut up many days in a dark room, and no one dares to come near you. Are you not ashamed to grieve in this manner, when you ought to be thanking God for having given you the most beautiful child that ever was seen? Were you not the envy of everybody? Did any one ever see him, or speak of him, without admiring him; and instead of letting this child continue in this world, till he should be worn out with trouble and sorrow, has not God taken him to heaven in all his beauty? What would you have more? For shame! leave off weeping, and let me open a window.'

"In subsequent letters, Sir Stamford says, 'We have this morning buried our beloved Charlotte. Poor Marsden was carried to the grave not ten days before,—within the last six months, we have lost our three eldest children; judge what must be our distress. We have now only one child left. We were, perhaps, too happy, too proud of our blessings; and if we had not received this severe check, we might not sufficiently have felt and known the necessity of an hereafter. The Lord's will be done, and we are satisfied.'

When his public duties permitted Sir Stamford Raffles to return to England, which had become

absolutely necessary for his health, he embarked on board the *Fame*, the unfortunate fate of which is described in the following letter.

“ We embarked on the 2nd of February, 1824, in the *Fame*, and sailed at daylight for England with a fair wind, and every prospect of a quick and comfortable passage. The ship was everything we could wish ; and, having closed my charge at Bencoolen, much to my satisfaction, it was one of the happiest days of my life. We were perhaps too happy, for in the evening came a sad reverse. Lady Raffles had just gone to bed, and I had thrown off half my clothes, when a cry of ‘ Fire ! fire ! ’ roused us from our calm content, and in five minutes the whole ship was in flames. I found that the fire had its origin immediately under our cabin. ‘ Down with the boats. ’—‘ Lower Lady Raffles. ’—‘ Give her to me, ’ says one ;—‘ I’ll take her, ’ says the captain.—‘ Throw the gunpowder overboard. ’—‘ It cannot be got at ; it is in the magazine, close to the fire. ’—‘ Push off, push off,—stand clear of the after part of the ship. ’

“ All this passed much quicker than I can write it. We pushed off, and as we did so, the flames burst out of our cabin-window, and the whole of the after-part of the ship was in flames. We hailed the boat which pushed off from the other side ;—‘ Have you all on board ? ’ ‘ Yes, all, save

one.'—'Who is he?' 'Johnson, sick in his cot.'—'Can we save him?' 'No, impossible.'—At this moment, the poor fellow, scorched I imagine by the flames, roared out most lustily, having run upon deck. The captain pulled under the bowsprit of the ship, and picked the poor fellow up. The alarm was given at about twenty minutes past eight; there was not a soul on board at half-past eight, and in less than ten minutes after, she was one grand mass of fire, the masts and sails in a blaze, and rocking to and fro, threatening to fall in an instant. 'There goes her mizen-mast; pull away my boys: there goes the gunpowder. Thank God! thank God!'

"To make the best of our misfortune, we availed ourselves of the light from the ship to steer our course to the shore. She continued to burn till midnight, when the saltpetre which she had on board took fire, and sent up a brilliant and splendid flame, illuminating the horizon for fifty miles round, and casting that kind of blue light over us, which is, of all others, most horrible.

"At about eight or nine in the morning, we saw a ship standing out to us from the roads; and here, certainly, came a minister of Providence, in the character of a minister of the gospel, for the first person I recognised was one of our missionaries. When we landed, and drove back to our former

home, no words can do justice to the feeling, sympathy, and kindness, with which we were hailed; there was not a dry eye around us, and loud was the cry of 'God be praised!'

"The loss I have to regret beyond all is the whole of my drawings, between two and three thousand, all my collections, descriptions, and papers of every kind: and, to conclude, I will merely notice, that there was scarce an unknown animal, bird, beast, or fish, or an interesting plant, that we had not on board. All, all has perished: but, thank God, our lives have been spared, and we do not repine.'

"The morning after the loss of all that he had been collecting for so many years, Sir Stamford recommenced sketching his large map of Sumatra, set all his draftsmen to work in making new drawings, despatched a number of people into the forests, to collect more animals, and neither murmur nor lamentation ever escaped his lips; on the contrary, on the following Sabbath, he publicly returned thanks to Almighty God, for having preserved the lives of those who had been in such imminent danger."

Nor have we as yet turned our attention to another most interesting section of Biography—the history of martyrs and the developement of the lives and achievements of martyrs. Martyrs—

witnesses, that is the meaning of the word—confessors,—those who have dared to become the defenders and apologists for new truths, and new forms of truth ; it is not necessary that to become a martyr a man should be led to the stake or the scaffold for the truth. The man who bravely clothes himself in the spirit of determination, who lifts up his voice in tones not to be mistaken, who takes cheerfully and joyfully the shame and the contempt, and the suffering, the disgrace and malignity attached to the publication of new and true opinions, this man is a martyr. The term “martyr” is sacred to the defenders of truth in opposition to the conservator of ancient abuses or forms of error. Luther was not the less a martyr because he did not die for the truth. Wycliffe was not the less a martyr because he did not die for the truth, nor Copernicus, nor Kepler, nor Milton, nor George Fox. Widen the term martyr to its true and legitimate proportions.—Now the study of minds dauntless and heroic, the men whose hearts were on fire only with love to right, and who longed to see the reign of right established in the world, these men infuse heroism into the minds of weaker disciples ; they beautify the records of humanity with the noble doings of conscientiousness and goodness. It is while reading the chronicles and memoirs of such men as these, that we do perceive

how real a thing life is ; we find our respect for human nature, even in its low estate, increased ; all men, we find, are not hollow and heartless ; there are some who find in life a real purpose, who do not live for formulas, but for things, and who interpret life from the inner to the outer, and not from the outer to the inner. Every fanatic is not now, nor ever was, a martyr. Martyrs live to witness for a great idea—they do not put themselves in the way of persecution—they do not court it, they do not strut before the eyes of men as injured and badly treated beings ; their prominent thought is their idea—their central idea ; they will not yield it, they will not renounce it, they dream of it ; by day they concentrate all thought to it, and endure persecution, because it comes to meet them in the performance of an obvious duty, not because they go forth to meet it. The man who loves a persecuted, turbulent, noisy life, better than a quiet, silent working, is no martyr, but a mere fanatic ; the man who loves his ease so well, that as persecution approaches him he shrinks back from it, is no martyr, but a coward.

Now we reckon one of the most valuable uses of Biography to be, that it paints to us the lives of brave hearts. These are amongst its most inspiring pages : from Prometheus chained to the Caucasian rock ; from Socrates sitting on his low bedstead,

and drinking his bowl of hemlock ; from Polycarp in the flames, and Ignatius in the lion's den ; from Lord Cobham, and Anne Askew ; from Algernon Sydney, and Sir Harry Vane ; from the lives of innumerable characters brave and bold ; and from these comes forth an animating power to cheer us on also to brave and worthy deeds. From seraphic lives and lips truth comes forth more highly recommended ; that especially which man can cheerfully die for, demands from us a thought or two ; more—does it not demand from us a long and patient consideration ? How remarkable and note-worthy must that inner life be, which could, or can sustain a man through long years of suffering ; dying daily of tortures and torments, yet never quailing, never shrinking. Let the reader for instance, attentively note the life of a man like GEORGE FOX ; a man the greater part of whose days were passed in prison ; a man who no sooner stepped from one goal, than he walked into another ; for whom bonds and afflictions were prepared in every city and town in England,—who wrote his tracts in prison, and made the prison his home. What a mighty and self-sustaining power must there have been in the heart of this man,—and in his great and worthy companion, William Penn ! These men develop the martyr's soul ; nor can we doubt, had circumstances demanded, they would have gone as

cheerfully to death, as they went to prison. Or, let the reader look at the heroism of Master John Fox himself, the great martyrologist, as well as Martyr.

Though originally entered at Brazen-nose, he had been elected a fellow of Magdalen, where, by his close and retired habits of study, involving frequent absence from the College chapel, the rites of which were performed according to the Roman Catholic Church, he became such an object of suspicion and dislike, in those troublous times, as to be obliged to leave Oxford. Forsaken by his former friends, and even by his father-in-law, who availed himself of this season of desertion to withhold from him his paternal estate, Fox found an asylum in Warwickshire, in the house of Sir Thomas Lucy, of Charlecote, as tutor to his children; and having, while there, married the daughter of a citizen of Coventry, he went to live with her family.

In a memoir of his life, written by his eldest son, Samuel, and prefixed to his great work, we are informed that, after having passed some time thus obscurely, he made his way to London, a place calculated either for concealment and quiet, or for the display of superior genius. Another reason may have influenced him in this movement to the metropolis. Religion at that juncture, namely a few years before the death of Henry the

Eighth, appeared to be recovering itself. The king had removed papists from authority in the state, and placed his hopeful son Edward under the care of persons who appeared to him well fitted for forming the mind and views of the future sovereign, and whose fidelity and affection he knew he could trust. An extraordinary circumstance, or, as it is called in the original history, "a marvellous accident," now occurred to our author, whose poverty, notwithstanding the improvement in the prospect of public affairs, was extreme.

"As Master Fox one day sat in Paul's Church, spent with long fasting, his countenance thin, and eyes hollow, after the ghastly manner of dying men, every one shunning a spectacle of so much horror, there came to him one, whom he never remembered to have seen before, who, sitting by him and saluting him with much familiarity, thrust an untold sum of money into his hand, bidding him be of good cheer, and go and make much of himself, and take all occasions to prolong his life : and in the mean time let him know that within a few days new hopes were at hand, and a more certain condition of livelihood.

"Never did Fox learn who this timely benefactor could be, who not only relieved him in his utmost need, but actually proved a true herald of better days. It may have been a person who

knew his wants and merits, and, with a desire to aid and encourage him, naturally suggested more cheering prospects ; or, as is more probable, it was some one commissioned by the noble family who were at hand, to employ and support him."

Circumstances like these greatly interest us ; we love to linger over the well-marked incidents in the life of a man called to suffer and endure. The history of the sufferers is one of the most glorious and enchanting of all the chapters of Biography : it presents to us humanity, in the noblest period of its education ; beneath the sternest, but at the same time the most productive, schoolmaster ; we are led to inquire how far the condition of man would have been the same as it is at this day, if man had not suffered ? May we not describe all the toils and the battles of our race as so many martyrdoms ? The brave conquer in their sufferings and their trials,—the faint-hearted fail. Now, when we read the history of human trials and pains ; when we notice the end they have effected in the progress of the world, and the advancement of humanity in all that makes it truly great and noble ; as we remember that every fresh point has been won through almost infinite toil and distress ; that thus we have secured each stage in politics, in science, in religion, in all that makes the history of our race worthy and memorable,—do we not meet

with a magnificent and glorious intimation that even thus all life is a trial, a discipline, an endeavour, as we behold how that the suffering martyrs bear cheerfully, and endure patiently, because the promise of a great acquisition lies behind all their toils ; so we see shadowed forth the great purpose and reason of all human living. Life is not its own end. We read this even in the great aggregate of all written Biography. This is the lesson taught by the mighty myriads as they march along,—of all that dim and shadowy host striding, now dim and ghostlike, through the vast spheres of the spirit land,—of all that array of Generals, and Philosophers, and Poets, and Prophets, which one was for his own end ? Not one ; all lived for a principle ; never more really, indeed, than when appearing to live most entirely for themselves, or himself ; every suffering, every woe, is the subject of some law ; every mortal agony, every fearful strife, tends on to some inscrutable whitherward ; thus every fearful rending of our moral or mental being, and every bodily agony, has, at any rate, thus much of consolation ; it has but a most absurd face upon it, to argue that all these we behold, taken in its breadth and depth, appears to be environed round with some great world-plan, and then to arrive at the insane conclusion that the world-plan stops short here. Surely, if Biography teaches

us anything, it teaches us this thing, amongst others,—that man is endowed with a prodigality of power, out of all proportion with the sphere in which we find him placed ; that “ the life that is ” is wholly incomplete without “ the life to come.” Thus we have read the pages of Biography,—thus we have uttered the charmed and entrancing names that yet live in its chronicles and records. The Divine beauty has only impressed us with the certainty that here it was robbed of half its divinity,—that here it was rather a promise than a performance,—rather a dream than a realisation. We spoke of sufferers : how comes it that, for the most eminent of our race—for the seers and prophets—there has ever been reserved the large endowment of misery ? How is it that unhappiness ever companions and leans on genius ? How is it that we venerate the man who has a capacity to suffer, and feel that those who cannot suffer much are the more degraded of our race ? How is it that the strong words are cleft out of the soul by the lightnings of sorrow ; that the severe agony reveals, even as the darkness shows the stars ? Is it not because all this is the index of a latent power of a lamp that has struggled through the charnel and the sepulchre of the body, proclaiming its destiny ? We lay down our pen where we took it up—biography is the museum of life,—or rather shall

we say, it is the means by which is conducted to us the vitality and the magnetism of other and nobler men? they live for us

“E'en in their ashes live their wonted fires ;”

they rule our spirits from their arms, we repeat it again, there is a magnetism in a good great life—recorded or unrecorded—written or unwritten—it is not without its power. Do actions perish with the actor? Verily no! Thy honesty, or dishonesty, my friend, has an influence terribly perpetual. Shall a vegetable or an animal possess the power of reproducing itself, and shall not a thought, much more, possess such power and action? Not in vain, then, have good men lived! Alas! not in vain have lived the evil men! Both have been the founders or the upholders of dynasties of wrong or right doing.

The uses of Biography :—then, what may be the use of mine? How am I writing my life? I am writing it down somewhere—in some place—pray, to what intent?—for what purpose?—for what use?

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